

the BIBLICAL WORLD



EDITED BY
JOHN BARTON
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THE BIBLICAL WORLD



The Biblical World is a comprehensive guide to the contents, historical setting and social context of the Bible. It presents the fruits of years of specialist study in accessible form, and is essential reading for anyone who reads the Bible and would like to know more about how and why it came to be.

Volume I begins with an overview of the full range of Biblical material (Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament), before going on to more detailed discussion of the major genres of biblical literature – from myth and prophecy to poetry and proverbs. The contributors also consider the ways in which the texts have been transmitted, the significance of parallel and related versions, and past interpretations of the Bible.

Explorations of the historical background are complemented by the findings of archaeology, and discussion of matters such as language, law, administration, social life and the arts offers a fuller understanding of the social and cultural setting of ancient Israel and the early Christian churches. Major figures in the Bible – including Abraham, Jesus and Paul – are studied in detail, as are its central religious concepts, such as salvation and purity. Volume II concludes with a survey of how the Bible is studied and seen today.

Written by an international collection of acknowledged experts, this monumental work will be an invaluable resource for students, academics and clergy, and for all to whom the Bible is important as a religious or cultural document.

John Barton is Oriel and Laing Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture, University of Oxford, and Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. He is the author of numerous books and articles on biblical texts, and is also the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (1998) and (with John Muddiman) of *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (2001).



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Edited by

John Barton

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PREFACE



This book has been several years in the making, and much is owed to many advisers and helpers, as well as to the contributors. I am particularly indebted to its commissioning editor, Richard Stoneman, who first conceived the idea, and to his assistants Coco Stevenson and Catherine Bousfield who have seen it through to publication.

John Barton
Oriel College, Oxford
January 2001

ABBREVIATIONS



AB	Anchor Bible
ABC	<i>Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles</i> , A. K. Grayson (Locust Valley, New York, 1975)
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , D. N. Freedman (ed.) (Doubleday, 1992)
ABL	<i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum</i> , R. F. Harper (ed.), 14 vols (Chicago, 1892–1914)
AGJU	<i>Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums</i>
AIA	Archaeological Institute of America
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANEP	<i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> , J. B. Pritchard (ed.) (Princeton, 1969)
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , J. B. Pritchard (ed.) (Princeton, 3rd edn, 1969)
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> , H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds) (Berlin, 1972–)
ANTF	Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung
ARAB	<i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i> , D. D. Luckenbill, 2 vols (Chicago, 1926–7)
ASTI	<i>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</i>
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AThR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAG	Bauer, W., Arndt, W. F., Gingrich F. W. and Danker, F. W., <i>Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Chicago, 1957)
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BDF	Blass, F., Debrunner A. and Funk, R. W., <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Chicago, 1961)

BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BMes	Bibliotheca mesopotamica
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BR</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAH	Cambridge Ancient History
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CPJ	<i>Corpus papyrorum judaicorum</i> , V. Tcherikover (ed.), 3 vols (Cambridge, 1957–64)
CRBR	<i>Critical Review of Books in Religion</i>
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad novum testamentum
CTA	<i>Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939</i> , A. Herdner (ed.) (Paris, 1963)
<i>CurBS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
<i>EBib</i>	<i>Etudes bibliques</i>
<i>ErIsr</i>	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
<i>EsBib</i>	<i>Estudios bíblicos</i>
ET	English Translation
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDBSup	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBR	<i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series

JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KAI	<i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> , H. Donner and W. Röllig (Wiesbaden, 2nd edn, 1966–9)
KAR	<i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts</i> , E. Ebeling (Wiesbaden, 2nd edn, 1966–9)
KJV	King James Version
KTU	<i>Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> , M. Dietrich, O. Loretz and J. Sanmartín (eds) (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976)
LXX	Septuagint
MBPF	Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte
MT	Masoretic Text
ND	Nimrud Documents
NEAEHL	<i>The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> , E. Stern (ed.), 4 vols (Jerusalem, 1993)
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codices
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NIV	New International Version
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTG	New Testament Guides
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTT	<i>Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift</i>
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RGG	<i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> , K. Galling (ed.), 7 vols (Tübingen, 3rd edn, 1957–65)
RIDA	<i>Revue internationale des droits de l'antiquité</i>
RIMA	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SD	Studies and Documents
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and its World
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
TA	<i>Tel Aviv</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds), trans. by G. W. Bromiley, 10 vols (Grand Rapids, 1964–76)

— Abbreviations —

TLZ	<i>Theologische Literatur Zeitung</i>
TPIII	<i>The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, King of Assyria</i> , H. Tadmor (Jerusalem, 1994)
TRev	<i>Theologische Revue</i>
TRu	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TSSI	<i>Textbook of the Syrian Semitic Inscriptions</i> , C. L. Gibson (Oxford, 1971)
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TUAT	Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>



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INTRODUCTION



John Barton

To the religious believer, the Bible is a ‘fountain and well of truth’ (Cranmer 1908; cf. Muddiman 1983). To the literary critic, it is an immense cultural artefact that ‘sit[s] there inscrutably in the middle of our cultural heritage . . . frustrating all our efforts to walk around it’ (Northrop Frye 1982: xviii). To both it is essentially a monolith: a single book consisting of many thousands of words between two covers, all in a similar style, with consistent pagination and typeface.

However, to those who study it historically the Bible is not one thing, but many things. It is a library of books from, perhaps, a millennium of human history, deriving from two related but quite distinct faith systems, Judaism and Christianity. It invites the reader to walk around it, observing it from many sides and in many different perspectives. This book is an attempt to suggest what some of these perspectives might be.

First it is essential to have an overall grasp of the sweep of the biblical material, as currently organized into Old Testament (or Hebrew Bible), Apocrypha, and New Testament. For these three collections do have a certain coherence, and can be studied as subsets of the whole Scripture (see [chapters 1–3](#)). But we also need, secondly, to break them down into certain major genres: myths, historiographical texts, prophecies, Gospels, letters, and so on (see [chapters 4–11](#)).

Once this is done, questions arise that justify us in referring not simply to ‘The Bible’ but to ‘The Biblical World’. Foremost among these is the process by which the biblical texts have been transmitted, as studied by the discipline known as textual criticism ([chapters 12 and 13](#)). But at once questions arise about parallel and related ancient texts, many of which were discovered in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries – texts such as the Gnostic Gospels and the Dead Sea Scrolls ([chapters 14–17](#)). No one can study the Bible today without an awareness of this material. Nor can the contemporary task of interpreting the Bible be undertaken without knowing something of how it was interpreted in the past, by both Jews and Christians ([chapters 18 and 19](#)).

There was a time when the Bible was the only source for the history of the ancient world outside the ‘classical’ cultures of Greece and Rome. But modern discoveries, achieved principally through the work of archaeologists in the literal sense and of ‘archaeologists’ of the text – those who have analysed biblical tradition through

various modern literary techniques – have yielded much more information than was available in earlier ages. Sometimes this serves only to show that we cannot trust the biblical record to guide us, but at other times it shows it to be the tip of an iceberg, at least some of whose underlying structures we can reconstruct. [Chapters 20–6](#) outline what can be known at present about the cultural and political world in which the Bible came to be.

The institutions of ancient Israel and of the early Christian churches have come increasingly under scrutiny in the last few decades, partly through applying the techniques and questions of the social sciences to the biblical text. A section entitled ‘Institutions’ surveys some of these developments, together with the modern study of the languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) in which the texts are written.

Such study makes clear that the Bible cannot be studied merely as the product of certain principal characters, as a story of heroes and villains. Nevertheless modern study has thrown light on some of the central figures in biblical tradition, and these are surveyed in [chapters 37–41](#). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, together with their wives; Moses, David and Solomon; and Paul and Jesus: these are characters to whom biblical research returns again and again, sometimes with scepticism about the extent of our possible historical knowledge, sometimes in a surprisingly optimistic frame of mind.

The Bible is religious literature through and through, containing not everything written in Israel or within the early churches but only their theological literature. A complete guide to the religious ideas of the Bible would be a large book in itself, but the present volume offers a guide to a few of the more obvious concepts that the reader needs to know in order to make some sense of the text ([chapters 42–6](#)).

Finally there is a survey of how the Bible is seen and studied today, both in its theological and literary interpretation and through the many translations that proliferated particularly in the last century ([chapters 47–9](#)). Biblical translation is in many ways the stage on which interpretation is played out, and readers of this volume need to have a modern version of the Bible to accompany them as they read it.

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PART I

THE BIBLE

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CHAPTER ONE

THE OLD TESTAMENT/ HEBREW BIBLE



Rex Mason

The fact that this article appears under a dual heading reveals that there has been disagreement about the title, the extent, and, to some degree, the function of the Old Testament. 'Old Testament' is a Christian name for the sacred writings of Judaism, writings already venerated and regarded as authoritative by the time of Jesus of Nazareth, a veneration continued by most early Christians and encouraged by the reported respect for them of Jesus himself. In spite of the objections of some that they had been superseded by the new revelation God had made of himself in Jesus, it became the firm conviction of the early church that they remained a valid and authoritative set of texts, a valued part of its Jewish heritage. Nevertheless, such veneration was often achieved by exegetical methods of reading the Old Testament books that saw them as in some way 'prophetic' of the coming of Jesus, a valuable, but preparatory, pointer to the 'New Testament', which God had established with both Jews and Gentiles through the life and work of Jesus 'the Christ' ('Messiah'). Christian ways of reading and understanding the 'Old Testament', at both consciously theological and popular levels, have therefore often differed markedly from Jewish understanding. For this reason many Christian scholars now tend to avoid the term and to speak and write more often of 'the Hebrew Scriptures'.

However, this raises the issue of the extent of just what it is we mean when we speak of the 'Old Testament'. We know remarkably little about the process of how certain writings came to be vested with 'canonical' status in either the Jewish or the Christian communities. It seems, however, that the first five books of the Old Testament, the 'Torah' (meaning 'law' or 'instruction'), were accepted as supremely authoritative in the post-exilic Jewish community by perhaps as early as the fourth century BCE, although such a view would have resulted from a cumulative appreciation and use of them developed over a long period. There is some evidence that the prophetic books, both 'former' and 'latter' prophets (see below), had established themselves as similarly authoritative by the end of the third century BCE (although 'Torah', then and later, was always regarded as *the* supremely important authority). The others, known as 'the Writings', including Psalms, the Wisdom literature and Daniel, because many of them were mainly of later date (at least in their present form) than the other collections, were regarded as more marginal. Nevertheless, as with all writings that achieve 'canonical' status, they must have been widely used and admired.

All these works which thus made up the Jewish ‘Scriptures’ by the beginning of the Common Era were written in Hebrew, except for a few excerpts in the ‘Writings’ (Ezra 4:8 – 6:18; 7:12–26; Daniel 2:4 – 7:28), which were in Aramaic. By this time, however, Hebrew had become mainly only the ‘classical’ language of the Scriptures. Most Jewish people in Palestine actually spoke Aramaic, which had become the vernacular language throughout the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian empires, while many Jews living abroad, in such places as Egypt, spoke Greek, the vernacular language of the Greek and, to some extent, the Roman empires. A number of popular works therefore appeared in Greek, and many of these were included in a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, a translation made in Egypt from about the third century BCE onwards, known as ‘the Septuagint’ (LXX). This was the form of the Hebrew Scriptures known mainly to the writers of the New Testament, and it is therefore no surprise that a number of those additional Greek works it contained, such as ‘The Wisdom of Solomon’ and ‘Ecclesiasticus’, achieved considerable popularity among Christian communities.

In course of time Judaism decided to accept only those works written in Hebrew as authoritative, but the Christian church, in spite of the objections of some, accepted also the works that existed only in Greek, sometimes known as ‘the deuterocanonical books’. However, at the time of the Reformation, Protestants asserted their belief that only the Hebrew works were truly authoritative, and this has remained their position since, while the Roman Catholic Church still includes the Greek works. (The Orthodox Churches have always taken a similar view of the ‘deutero-canonical’ works, even including a few that do not figure in the Catholic canon.) Thus the term ‘Old Testament’ raises not only questions of the nature of the texts between Jews and Christians, but questions of content between different branches of the christian church. (For the books in the various ‘canons’, see the lists at the end of this chapter.) To call it ‘the Hebrew Bible’ is thus not entirely satisfactory, since, however defined, it is also part of the ‘Christian’ Bible. Perhaps, when referring more narrowly to ‘the Hebrew Scriptures’, the Jewish term *TANAK* is preferable. This is an acronym formed from the Hebrew names for the three main parts of the canon, *Torah* (law), *Nebi’im* (prophets), and *Kethubim* (writings).

Whatever title we give it, and whatever canon we accept, it is clear that the ‘Old Testament’ (the name used here for convenience) was a long time in reaching its present form. Few of the individual books that comprise it can be thought of as the work of a single author. Even where, as is probably the case with most of the prophetic books, an individual’s thoughts and teaching lay behind it, the books that bear the name of those individuals have resulted from a long process of oral and written tradition, and have been subject to editing processes designed to make the ‘message’ of the prophet relevant to people of later times. The same may be said of many of the other books, even where tradition may, or may have not, have associated them with a specific historical figure. It is true of the Pentateuch (*Torah*), traditionally assigned to Moses, and the so-called history books. The Psalter, linked in tradition with David, contains many compositions from times later than his, while the Wisdom literature, again traditionally associated with Solomon, contains work from many hands continuing late into the post-exilic period.

While, therefore, the composition of the books of the Old Testament was a

complex, continuing process stretching over centuries, modern biblical scholarship sees in general three main stages to its emergence. It is clear that Yahwism became the State religion of the pre-exilic kingdom of Judah, and a good deal of literature, while containing, as it did, much ancient material, was produced in the period of the monarchy to bolster claims for the divine origin and sanction of the royal house of David that ruled over it. In the manner of those days, the tie between the divine world and the royal house, which was thought to rule in the name of the gods and as their representative, was seen to be a very close one. Much in the Pentateuch, therefore, especially the so-called Yahwistic strand (see below), which, in spite of some contemporary scholarly disagreement, still seems most likely to have originated in the Judean court during the monarchic period, is designed to show how the emergence of the nation of Israel, under the leadership of the Davidic kings, was in the mind and purpose of God from the very earliest times. All is presented as the 'story' of Israel, a story that runs through the Pentateuch and continues in the books of Joshua and Judges. The climax to it all comes in the books of Samuel and the early chapters of Kings, which tell how God chose David and his line to rule over this people and made a covenant with him assuring him of the everlasting nature of the dynasty. This covenant was sealed with the building by Solomon of the temple of Jerusalem, the city David had captured, thus ensuring God's presence at the heart of the national life, a presence that guaranteed the eternal security, not only of the Davidic dynasty, but of the city of Jerusalem itself. Such a 'theology' of royal house and temple is also enshrined in a number of Psalms (e.g. 2, 21, 89, 110, 132), which no doubt had their liturgical origins in the worship of the temple. All of this is entirely in line with the way other nations at that time saw the status and security of their identity as a result of a pact between the gods and their royal representatives on earth. The actual historical process by which 'Israel' emerged as a national identity and came to occupy the area we now know as Palestine is shrouded in uncertainty. But the 'story' presented in this first level of the Old Testament Scriptures was the one by which self-understanding and self-confidence was established and expressed.

Such confidence came to be severely shaken, however, as this tiny nation was threatened by the expansionary aims of powerful neighbours, in particular first from the Assyrians in the eighth century, and then from the Babylonians in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. Under the latter, Jerusalem was destroyed, the royal Davidic line removed and many society leaders deported into exile. It is remarkable that such a shattering of the whole royal ideology did not mark the end of Yahwism as a living religion. That it did not is due in part to those who put a much heavier emphasis on the ethical implications of Yahwism, already a strong feature of the 'covenant' obligations by which Israel was seen to be bound to Yahweh as his 'special' people, than on its political ramifications. Foremost among these were the prophets who, in the name of the very Yahwism by which the rulers claimed their power and vested interests, challenged them with its obligations of justice and compassion. From Amos in the eighth century BCE onwards, there was a strong prophetic challenge to what were seen as abuses of power.

Such prophetic voices claimed that God had given power to kings, priests and other leaders in the community, in order to establish a society in which the rights

and interests of the poor and weakest members were safeguarded. Such prophetic complaints were taken up by those scholars referred to as 'the Deuteronomists', so called because they not only produced our book of Deuteronomy, but also edited the 'history' books and some of the prophetic books from their own particular theological stance and in their own distinctive language. They stressed that the 'covenant' relationship between God and Israel, and between God and the royal house of David, had always been *conditional* upon their keeping the terms of the ethical laws of the covenant. Further, they believed that that same covenant demanded of king and people the worship of Yahweh *alone*, and they strongly attacked every form of what they saw as syncretism, that is, the worship of both Yahweh and other gods. In their hands this became a powerful tool with which to criticize the foreign policy of many kings who sought military and political alliances with other nations, alliances that presumably, at least in their eyes, involved acknowledgement of those nations' tutelary deities. Thus they were able to explain why the apparent breaking of God's promise to David and the nation was not due to either the fickleness or the powerlessness of Yahweh. The religious and moral conditions of the covenant had been broken. That is why God allowed this disaster to come upon the nation. It was judgement on them for sin. The same belief, however, enabled them to hold out hope for the future. If only the nation would return to the conditions of the covenant, then they might hope, in the grace of God, to experience again its blessings. This is the message that has informed the Deuteronomistic editing of the 'historical' and prophetic books of the Old Testament, much of the book of Deuteronomy and some prophetic books like Jeremiah. These 'Deuteronomists', then, strongly influenced by much pre-exilic prophecy, are the ones responsible for this second stage of the development of the Old Testament.

The third stage is that which followed the exile and the partial restoration of the community in Jerusalem and Judah under the Persians. In spite of early hopes there was no restoration of the Davidic monarchy, and Judah was now a subservient part of the Persian empire. What did Yahwism mean now that it was no longer the religion of a nation state? This was the time when priests came more and more to the fore in the conduct of the community's life and, with the rebuilding of the temple, they established what may best be described as a 'theocracy'. It was the people's status as a people of God that mattered now above all else, and this status was more and more defined in obedience to the law and the proper observance of the worship of God in the temple. Here, through the correct observance of the sacrifices and religious festivals, God dealt with the sins of his people and so maintained that vital level of communication between deity and people by which they could experience his grace and know his presence. This outlook prevails in all those long sections of the Pentateuch that deal in great detail with the various sacrifices and correct forms and observances of the temple worship, sections making up what scholars call 'the Priestly Code' (see below), and it also finds expression in the final form of the book of Ezekiel, the post-exilic prophets and in the books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. This 'third' stage of the emergence of the Old Testament Scriptures thus represented a brave attempt to redefine Yahwism and make it a living force and reality for the post-exilic community. It was the need to keep their life and identity distinctive that, no doubt, led to as great an emphasis on laws of ritual cleanliness

and observance as on those that relate to what we would call 'moral' or 'ethical' matters, thus presenting a strange contrast to the pre-exilic prophets who emphasized the far greater importance of the latter.

Included in this 'third' stage of development have to be those Wisdom writings (Job, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom) that wrestled more and more with the problems of suffering and injustice in human affairs; stories that urged people living under foreign rule to keep the faith (e.g. Esther, Tobit); and books that express more far-reaching 'apocalyptic' hopes for a time when God would intervene once again drastically to deliver his people (e.g. Daniel). Yet, as we have seen, all the works of the Old Testament, even those that had their origin before the exile, bear evidence of all three stages in the final edited form in which we now have them.

To turn in more detail to the various components of the Old Testament 'canon' it is natural to begin with Torah. This section of the canon comprises five books, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They include some generally identifiable broad sections. Genesis 1–11, often referred to as 'the Primeval History', tells of the creation of the world and of humankind, the threat to that creation through the sin of human beings that brings the judgement of the flood, the salvation of Noah and his family and enough animals to restart creation, yet of persistent sin symbolized by the building of the tower of Babel with the resultant division of languages between nations. These chapters draw on myths and traditional material that in some form or other were widely known in the ancient Near East. Yet they are told from a distinctive theological slant and, with the inclusion of the genealogies that trace the descent of Abraham from Adam, they aim to show that Israel has been in the mind and purpose of the Creator from the first.

Genesis 12–50 narrates the stories of the patriarchs beginning with the migration of Abraham from Ur at the command of God. They draw on a large range of saga-like and related material, much of which originally related to quite distinctive clan groupings, centred on various local shrines, but which have now been brought together by portraying Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as all members of one family. They thus stress the 'all-Israel' theme so important at the time of the monarchy and at later periods of Israel's history, while, by showing that God has promised the land of Canaan to the descendants of these patriarchs, they establish Israel's title deeds to the land. The Joseph narrative links the patriarchal stories to the account of Israel's slavery in Egypt and the delivery from that bondage by the redemptive act of God, an act that became the foundation stone of the covenant of faith of later Israel. This is told in Exodus 1–18, and then follows the account of the foundation of the covenant between God and Israel at Mount Sinai. The legal obligations of that covenant are stressed in two law codes, the Decalogue (Exod. 20:1–17) and the 'Book of the Covenant' (Exod. 21–23). There follow detailed instructions to Moses concerning the making of a 'tabernacle' (clearly based on the later temple in Jerusalem), the institution of the Aaronic priesthood and the major sacrifices and festivals of Israel's religious calendar. These are continued in even greater detail in Leviticus and Numbers where liturgical matters are interspersed with the story of Israel's forty years of 'wandering in the wilderness', a period of delay that was seen as judgement for the unfaithfulness of the people. This contains another law code, dealing with both ritual and ethical matters, known as 'the Code of Holiness' (Lev. 17–26).

Deuteronomy is presented as a series of sermons by Moses spoken as the people stand at last on the threshold of the promised land of Canaan, recalling God's past mercies and urging them to renewed obedience to the covenant in the terms of a new law code, found in Deuteronomy 12–26. The book ends with the death of Moses following his commission to Joshua to lead the people into the land he had seen but not entered.

On the face of it all this might seem to be a seamless garment of woven narrative, but inner tensions and contradictions, variations in terminology and theological outlook, and other characteristics have long since led scholars to believe that it is a complex amalgam of material from many different ages. In general many have detected four major strands of tradition within it. The first is the 'Yahwistic Source' (J), so called because it assumes that God was known by the name Yahweh from the first (Gen. 4:26). It represents mainly a southern, Judean outlook and is concerned to authenticate the rule of the Davidic dynasty and so dates from some time in the monarchic period. A second narrative intertwines with it from Genesis 15 onwards, called the 'Elohistic Source' (E), which believes the name Yahweh was first revealed only to Moses (Exod. 3:13–15). This seems to show greater interest in the northern kingdom of Israel and expresses something of the outlook of the eighth-century prophetic movement. Deuteronomy (D), with its distinctive style, vocabulary and theological emphases, contains a law code so closely followed in the account of King Josiah's religious reforms in the seventh century, especially in its insistence that legitimate worship could only be carried out in the one central sanctuary of Jerusalem (2 Kings 22:8 – 23:25), that it is felt this must have been the law book that was 'found' in the temple, which inspired those reforms. 'D' therefore is to be dated in the seventh century. The final source is known as the 'Priestly Code' (P) comprising narratives and legal sections that deal with matters relating to the cult. This seems to reflect the interest of the priests whose task was to reconstruct the theocracy after the rebuilding of the temple following the exile and so must itself be post-exilic in date. All this is still a matter of keen scholarly debate and disagreement but may be said to represent something of a broad 'consensus'. The fact that the Pentateuch reads as it does, however, is due in no small degree to the skill and theological convictions of its final redactors (editors) and certainly those who insist that we must take seriously the final form of the Torah, and not merely analyse it into its constituent elements, have a strong case to argue.

The prophetic section of the canon falls into two parts, 'Former' and 'Latter' prophets. At first glance it may appear strange that what we might call the 'history books' (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) are designated as 'prophets' of any kind. They cover a vast range, from the account of the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, its distribution among the tribes of Israel, the period of the Judges, the introduction of monarchy, the division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon, and the fortunes of the two kingdoms until the fall of northern Israel to Assyria in the eighth century and the fall of Judah to the Babylonians in 586 BCE. They draw also on a wide range of source material, some of it named, some of it to be deduced from the form the history takes. But the whole has been edited by the 'Deuteronomists' with the aim of showing why it was that these disasters befell the people of God who had been promised the protection of Yahweh. To that extent

the work is a kind of 'preaching', accounting for the disaster and pointing their contemporaries in the exilic period to the path of penitence by which they might know a deliverance again as, so often, their fathers had done in the past. It is this 'message' that makes the place of these books in the 'prophetic' section apposite.

While 'prophecy' in many forms was a phenomenon widely known throughout the ancient Near East, only Israel has produced such a remarkable corpus of written 'prophetic' literature as that found in the 'Latter Prophets'. While many prophets served the courts and temples that employed them in order to secure the divine favour and warn of conduct that might lead to divine disfavour, only Israel appears to have seen the emergence of individual prophets, by no means all of them in any apparent 'official' position, who so fiercely criticized the conduct of king, priests, court prophets and the rich and powerful in society, threatening them in the name of God with dire consequences for their sin. From the time of Amos in the north in the eighth century onwards a succession of such prophets followed (including Hosea in the north, Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah in the south) with very similar messages. Presumably they spoke most of their oracles (only a very few instances are given of prophets writing their words), and these were remembered by groups of followers and, as time went on, committed to writing. The reason that some were so immortalized while others, whom they often condemned as 'false' prophets, were not, was probably not a little due to the fact that their words appeared to have been proved true when the disasters they had threatened actually happened.

It is clear that all the prophetic books underwent a long process of editing and development as oracles were arranged in ways that the editors found appropriate and were given fresh interpretation to adapt them to the needs of later situations. The result is a unique collection of three major books, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, together with a collection of twelve 'minor' prophets (so called because they were much shorter) known as 'The Book of the Twelve'. It is interesting that, after the exile, while prophecy seems to have known a brief period of revival (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi), it faded away to be replaced, later, by more 'apocalyptic' writings. The reasons for this are doubtless complex but the very process of writing may have helped to 'fix' the prophetic corpus and accelerate its acceptance as having 'canonical' authority, an authority that would have discouraged the emergence of 'new' prophecy. To be accepted, later works had to be issued under the 'pseudonym' of some great authority from the past.

The 'Writings' cover a wide range of literary genres. The Psalms express the language of worship and include compositions that must have formed part of the liturgy in the royal temple in pre-exilic times. As the collection stands, however, it also obviously includes later psalms that lament the disasters of the exile and also reflect post-exilic 'Torah' piety. At this time psalms that obviously referred to the pre-exilic Davidic king (e.g. 2, 21, 45, 89, 110, 132) must have been given an eschatological interpretation, or 'democratized' by finding the fulfilment of their promises in the emergence of the post-exilic theocratic community (cf. Isa. 55:3–5), a situation helped by the fact that traditionally their composition was associated with David. The collection has been arranged in five 'books', possibly on analogy with the five books of the Torah and, in its present form, represents the hymn-book of the post-exilic 'second' temple.

The 'Wisdom' books also represent post-exilic developments. The collections of proverbial sayings and proverbs to be found in Proverbs 10–31 include many that date back to early times and that doubtless had their origin in clan life, in court 'instruction' and in temple circles. There are many parallels to such collections in the ancient Near East. In Proverbs 1–9, however, there is to be found a more 'theological' investigation into the nature and authority of 'Wisdom', in which Wisdom is thought of as a distinct 'being', a female figure, created by God from before the beginning of the world, and destined by him to bring illumination to human beings. Several factors may be at work here. Again, we may see foreign influences being adapted to the special needs of Israel since Ma'at was the Egyptian goddess of wisdom who plays a similar role in the Egyptian wisdom literature. A growing sense that there is only one God, Yahweh (as opposed to the view that Yahweh is the only god, among others, with whom Israel has to do), probably led to the idea of intermediaries between a transcendent God and his created world. Again, the wisdom thinkers were probably speculating on the revelation God makes of himself in the world of creation, the world of human observation and experience, in addition to the 'supernatural' revelation celebrated in his great saving deeds in history and the divinely given prophetic word. Divine authority is being claimed for the teaching of the wise in the idea that this has itself been revealed by the divinely begotten figure of Wisdom. In fact, in the book of Ecclesiasticus, otherwise known as 'The Wisdom of ben Sirach' (c. 190 BCE), 'Torah' and 'Wisdom' are equated (24:23). To a growing conviction that there is only one God can also be traced Wisdom's preoccupation with questions of theodicy as found in the books of Job and Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth). How can evil exist in a world that has been made by the one good God? The same theological concern also begins to give rise to a kind of modified dualism that attributes evil in God's world to malevolent supernatural powers (see 1 Chron. 21:1; cf. 2 Sam. 24:1; Dan. 10:14).

In addition to liturgical and wisdom material the Writings contain 'historical' compositions in the books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. Chronicles, using the books of Samuel and Kings, and possibly other historical records, as source material, reconstructs the development of Israel before the exile in such a way as to show that the post-exilic theocratic community is the true 'heir' to the promises of God, the true 'Israel'. The book of Nehemiah recounts the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah. Ezra, like a post-exilic Moses, brings the law with him to Jerusalem and instigates a renewed 'covenant' between the people and God, thus sealing the authentic line of continuity between pre- and post-exilic 'Israel'. The genre is further represented by the books of Maccabees, which tell the story of the struggles within Judaism in the time of the Greek empire, works that again express a very clear religious and political agenda.

Popular stories of individuals also figure in the Writings, with such stories as Ruth, Esther, Judith, Tobit and of Susanna (in an addition to the book of Daniel, itself an 'apocalyptic'-type representative of 'prophecy' in the Writings whose late date meant it was not included in the already established canon of 'Prophecy'). Such stories are always popular and were mostly designed to encourage faithfulness to Torah in the often adverse and difficult circumstances in which the faithful found themselves under foreign control at home or living in an alien cultural and religious environment abroad.

<i>The Hebrew Bible</i>	<i>The Greek Bible</i>	
Torah	Historical Books	Prophetic Books
Genesis	Genesis	Twelve Minor Prophets
Exodus	Exodus	Hosea
Leviticus	Leviticus	Amos
Numbers	Numbers	Micah
Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy	Joel
	Joshua	Obadiah
'Former' Prophets	Judges	Jonah
Joshua	Ruth	Nahum
Judges	1 Samuel	Habakkuk
Samuel	2 Samuel	Zephaniah
Kings	1 Kings	Haggai
	2 Kings	Zechariah
'Latter' Prophets	1 Chronicles	Malachi
Isaiah	2 Chronicles	Isaiah
Jeremiah	1 Esdras	Jeremiah
Ezekiel	Ezra	<i>Baruch 1–5</i>
The Twelve	Nehemiah	Lamentations
Hosea	Esther (<i>with additions</i>)	<i>Letter of Jeremiah</i>
Joel	<i>Judith</i>	(= <i>Baruch 6</i>)
Amos	<i>Tobit</i>	Ezekiel
Obadiah	<i>1 Maccabees</i>	<i>Susanna</i>
Jonah	<i>2 Maccabees</i>	(= <i>Daniel 13</i>)
Micah	<i>3 Maccabees</i>	Daniel 1–12
Nahum	<i>4 Maccabees</i>	(with additions of
Habakkuk		<i>Song of Azariah</i>
Zephaniah		and <i>Song of the Three Jews</i>)
Haggai	Didactic Books	<i>Bel and The Dragon</i>
Zechariah	Psalms	(= <i>Daniel 14</i>)
Malachi	Proverbs	
	Ecclesiastes	
Writings	Song of Songs	
Psalms	Job	
Job	<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>	
Proverbs	<i>Ecclesiasticus</i>	
Ruth		
Song of Songs		
Ecclesiastes		
Lamentations		
Esther		
Daniel		
Ezra–Nehemiah		
Chronicles		

Books additional to the Hebrew Bible are in italics.

Books are given the names familiar to English readers. Samuel and Kings in the Greek Bible are called 'The Four Books of the Kingdoms' and Ezra–Nehemiah is '2 Esdras'.

Figure 1.1 Books of the Hebrew and Greek Bibles in their canonical order.

If, finally, we ask about the enduring value of the Old Testament, the signals are mixed. It has to be admitted that there is a good deal of national and political chauvinism expressed in it, and the idea of the warrior God who fights in the interests of one people and one political system and urges the destruction of their enemies, widespread as such views were in the ancient Near East, can seem only ethically and religiously repugnant now. Nevertheless, the Old Testament also contains the views of those who came to see that Yahweh, as the only God, was also concerned for all peoples, and that his purpose was to establish justice and righteousness for all. Prophets, law-givers and others affirmed that the 'enemies' of such a God were not just, conveniently, the enemies of a particular state or dynasty, but all who failed to act in compassion for the poor and underprivileged. They warned that God would not let human opposition thwart his purposes for justice on the earth, even when those who opposed him claimed to bear his name and stand in a specially favoured relationship with him. In place of crude (and hopelessly unrealistic) earlier dreams of world domination in the name of Yahweh, at least some in Israel came to see their place among the nations as being bearers of the revelation of God's name and nature. It is very largely because the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament express such ethical and religious insights that this is in fact what happened, and the Old Testament has fathered three of the world's major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

For Christians the Old Testament has to occupy a special place as the Bible of Jesus and all the writers of the New Testament. This means, at the least, that its language, imagery and religious ideas, as well as having much intrinsic value of their own, form an indispensable key for unlocking the meaning of the New Testament itself. Neglect of the Old Testament in worship, in the pulpit and lecture room, inevitably brings a diminution in understanding and appreciation of the New Testament and the story of the Christian church itself.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE APOCRYPHA



Adele Reinhartz

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘apocrypha’ stems from the Greek, meaning ‘hidden away.’ Within the context of the biblical canon, however, the term refers to a set of Jewish texts from the second-temple period (second century BCE to first century CE) whose canonicity is disputed. These texts are not to be found in the Hebrew scriptures – the Tanakh¹ – nor are they generally included in Protestant Bibles, but they are present in Bibles intended for use in Roman Catholic, Orthodox Christian, and, increasingly, in academic settings. Furthermore, the specific list of apocryphal works itself varies. The books of Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach), Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Additions to Daniel (Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Jews, Susanna, Bel and The Dragon), 1 and 2 Maccabees are included in all listings. Greek and Slavonic Orthodox Bibles add the Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151, 1 Esdras (called 2 Esdras in the Slavonic canon), and 3 Maccabees. The Greek Orthodox canon includes 4 Maccabees in an appendix; Slavonic Orthodox Bibles include 3 Esdras, often known as 4 Ezra according to its designation in the Vulgate. Hence those who considered the texts canonical considered them to have been hidden or withdrawn from common use because they contained mysteries too profound for the general reader to comprehend. This understanding is hinted at in 2 Esdras (4 Ezra) 14:45–6, in which God tells Ezra to ‘make public the twenty-four books [of the canonical Hebrew scriptures] that you wrote first, and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people.’² Those who abhorred the Apocrypha, on the other hand, believed that they should be hidden away as heretical or spurious texts (Metzger 1957: 5).

In our own day, general readers of the Bible might well add a third meaning to ‘apocrypha,’ as texts tucked into the space between the Old Testament and New Testament portions of their Bibles, which, unlike Genesis and historical Jesus questions, rarely see the light of public discussion and are apparently too esoteric for any but the most dedicated scholar. This chapter is intended to dispel such notions by providing a general introduction to the admittedly complex history of the Apocrypha as a collection, to the individual books therein, and to some of their major themes and ideas.

THE APOCRYPHA AS A COLLECTION

With the exception of 2 Esdras (4 Ezra), the apocryphal books are present in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible that was used widely in diaspora Greek-speaking Jewish communities in the second-temple period. The scant references to apocryphal books in rabbinic sources suggest that there was a period during which the canonicity of at least the Wisdom of Ben Sira was debated in Jewish circles. Ultimately, none was admitted to the canon, due in part perhaps to awareness of their late date *vis-à-vis* most biblical books (De Lange 1978: 9). Because the Septuagint itself fell out of Jewish usage in the early centuries of the common era, the Apocrypha, though the product of second-temple Judaism, were read, preserved, and transmitted by Christians. Yet from the beginning of the process of canonization of Christian scripture, these texts were the subject of controversy, in large measure because of the discrepancies between the Hebrew Bible, from which these texts were absent, and the Septuagint, in which they are scattered among the books whose canonicity was not disputed.

The apocryphal texts are quoted by the church fathers as authoritative scripture, particularly by those who did not know Hebrew and relied on the Septuagint alone. In preparing the Vulgate, however, Jerome distinguished between biblical texts that could be used as a basis for establishing doctrine, and apocryphal texts that are edifying but not decisive from a doctrinal perspective (Metzger 1957: 179–80). In the Old Testament section Jerome called the reader's attention to the apocryphal additions to the books of Esther and Daniel by means of prefaces, and included translations of Tobit and Judith. Later Latin-speaking Christians added translations of the other books that had been current in Latin before Jerome's time. Other texts, namely, the Prayer of Manasseh, 1 Esdras and 2 Esdras, were included as an appendix. Copyists often omitted Jerome's prefaces, however, and hence blurred the lines between the canonical and apocryphal material. Later editions of the Vulgate incorporated the Apocrypha, probably using the Old Latin version, within the sequence of the Old Testament, but continued to relegate the Prayer of Manasseh and 1 and 2 Esdras to an appendix. Hence for readers of the Vulgate, there was little to distinguish most of the Apocrypha from the undisputed biblical books.

Protestant and Catholic viewpoints on the canonicity of the Apocrypha were entangled in the polemics between these two groups. In the sixteenth century Luther and the early Protestants rejected the canonicity of the Apocrypha, because they had been used by the Catholic Church to support views such as apocalypticism (2 Esdras), purgatory (2 Maccabees 12:43–5) or works' righteousness (Tobit). The Roman Catholic Church, at the Council of Trent (April 8, 1546), in turn pronounced an anathema upon anyone who did not accept the apocryphal books (with the exception of the Prayer of Manasseh and 1 and 2 Esdras) as sacred and canonical (Metzger 1957: 189). To this day these texts are considered 'deuterocanonical,' inspired, though later in date than other books of the Old Testament. The Orthodox Churches were also divided in their stance towards these texts. Some leaders of Eastern Orthodoxy emphasized the distinction between the canonical and apocryphal books while others placed the latter on a level with the former (Metzger 1957: 193). These variations in the status of the Apocrypha are apparent in the array of Christian Bibles

in any bookstore. Depending upon their sponsorship and intended audience, Bibles may or may not contain the Apocrypha, may relegate them to a separate section between the Old and New Testament (e.g., New Revised Standard Version) or include some of them within the sequence of Old Testament books (e.g., Jerusalem Bible).

Despite their marginal and disputed place in the canon, the Apocrypha have exercised a strong hold on the cultural imagination, as the subject of numerous paintings, dramas, poems, and novels (cf. Metzger 1957: 205–38). They have even had an impact on the history of the western world. Apparently Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain were persuaded to finance Christopher Columbus’s voyage of 1492 after he cited 2 Esdras (4 Ezra) 6:42. On the basis of this passage, which indicates six-sevenths of the oceanic waters were dried up by God to create land, Columbus argued that the ocean between the west coast of Europe and the east coast of Asia could be no great width and might be navigated in a few days with a fair wind (Metzger 1957: 232–4).

THE BOOKS OF THE APOCRYPHA

The headings employed below pertain primarily to literary genres. These categories are not watertight, however. In many cases, the literary and theological features of the text bear their strongest similarities not to other texts within this collection but to biblical, pseudepigraphical, or Greco-Roman texts.

Historical writings

These books are written in a historiographic style modeled after the historical biblical books such as Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. They are often used – with caution – as historical sources for specific events in the second-temple period.

1 Esdras reproduces the substance of 2 Chronicles 35:1 – 36:23, Ezra, and Nehemiah 7:38 – 8:12, with some variation in detail, order, and content. Its purpose is unclear, though it may reflect the rivalry between the Jerusalem temple and its rivals, namely, the Oniad temple at Leontopolis in Egypt and the Tobiad temple at ‘Araq-e-Amir in Transjordan (Attridge 1984: 160). 1 Esdras is independent of the Septuagint translation of Ezra–Nehemiah and was used by the first-century Jewish historian Josephus as his source for the events that it covers. Its latest possible date is therefore the mid-first century CE. Its close parallels to the book of Daniel (e.g., 1 Esdras 4:40 = Daniel 2:37) suggest a date after 165 BCE, the date generally assigned to Daniel. Its provenance is uncertain.

1 Maccabees is a brief account of the Hellenistic period, from the Alexandrian conquest to the reign of John Hyrcanus I. It is extant in Greek and Latin translations of the original Hebrew and is likely of Palestinian Jewish provenance. It dates from shortly after the death of John Hyrcanus (1 Maccabees 16:23–4), who was the High Priest in the Hasmonean state between 134 and 104 BCE, though [chapters 14–16](#) may be an addition written after 70 CE. It is often used as a historical source for the causes, events, and aftermath of the Maccabean revolt, with some allowances made for its decidedly pro-Hasmonean perspective (cf. 5:55–62; 14:27–45; 7:8; 1:11).

2 Maccabees is an epitome or abridgment of a five-volume history written by Jason of Cyrene (2:23–8), which covers the same period as 1 Maccabees 1:10–78:50, namely, the reigns of the High Priest Onias III and Seleucus IV to the defeat of Nicanor's army (180–61 BCE). Greek is the original language. The epitome idealizes the piety of Judas and provides a theological interpretation of history as well as a celebration of martyrdom. The earliest possible date for Jason's history is 110 BCE, after Nicanor's victory. The epitomator's statement in 15:37, that Jerusalem had remained in Jewish hands, dates the epitome to the period before 63 BCE, when Rome took over direct rule of Judea.

Despite its name, 3 Maccabees is not about the Maccabees, nor is it related to the other books named after them, though it may have been composed for an annual commemoration of the martyrs' deaths (Young 1998: 330). It describes three episodes in the relationship between the Jews and Ptolemy IV Philopator, king of Egypt from 221 to 204 BCE: an attempted assassination of Ptolemy foiled by an apostate Jew named Dositheus, an unsuccessful attempt by the king to enter the Jerusalem temple, and Ptolemy's persecution of Egyptian Jews. It has been used as a historical source, though strong legendary features raise doubts about its accuracy. It was written in Greek, in Alexandria between 30 BCE and 70 CE.

Moralistic narratives

Like modern novels, and the Greco-Roman novels of the Hellenistic period, these books were intended for entertainment as well as to convey a moralistic or didactic message (Wills 1995: 5).

Tobit tells of a pious man of the Diaspora, who becomes blind after providing proper burial for a fellow Jew. Believing that he will soon die, he sends his son Tobias, accompanied by 'Azariah' – the angel Raphael – to redeem a sum of money in a distant land. Tobias returns not only with the money, but with a remedy for his father's blindness and with a fitting bride named Sarah, having vanquished – with Raphael's help – the demon who had caused Sarah's seven previous bridegrooms to die in the marriage bed. The narrative employs well-known folk motifs such as the Grateful Dead Man, and the Monster in the Bridal Chamber (Wills 1995: 73; Zimmerman 1958: 6–12). Fragments found at Qumran, four in Aramaic and one in Hebrew, suggest a Hebrew or Aramaic original. Tobit is generally dated to the second century BCE, but the absence of references to the Torah and Prophets as collected works may imply an earlier date (Nickelsburg 1984: 45). The provenance may be Jerusalem, Antioch, or Alexandria.

Judith is a lengthy novella set during a dire, if fictional, military crisis facing the town of Bethulia at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar's Assyrian army and his general Holofernes.³ Judith, a wealthy widow, saves Bethulia when she develops and successfully carries out a risky and gruesome plan for killing Holofernes. The book was probably written in Hebrew during the latter part of the second century BCE. It was transmitted in three slightly different Greek versions, two Latin versions, a Syriac version, and several later Hebrew recensions.

Greek Esther, like its Hebrew counterpart, tells of the Jewish queen to the Persian king Artaxerxes, who saves the Jewish people from a pogrom engineered by the

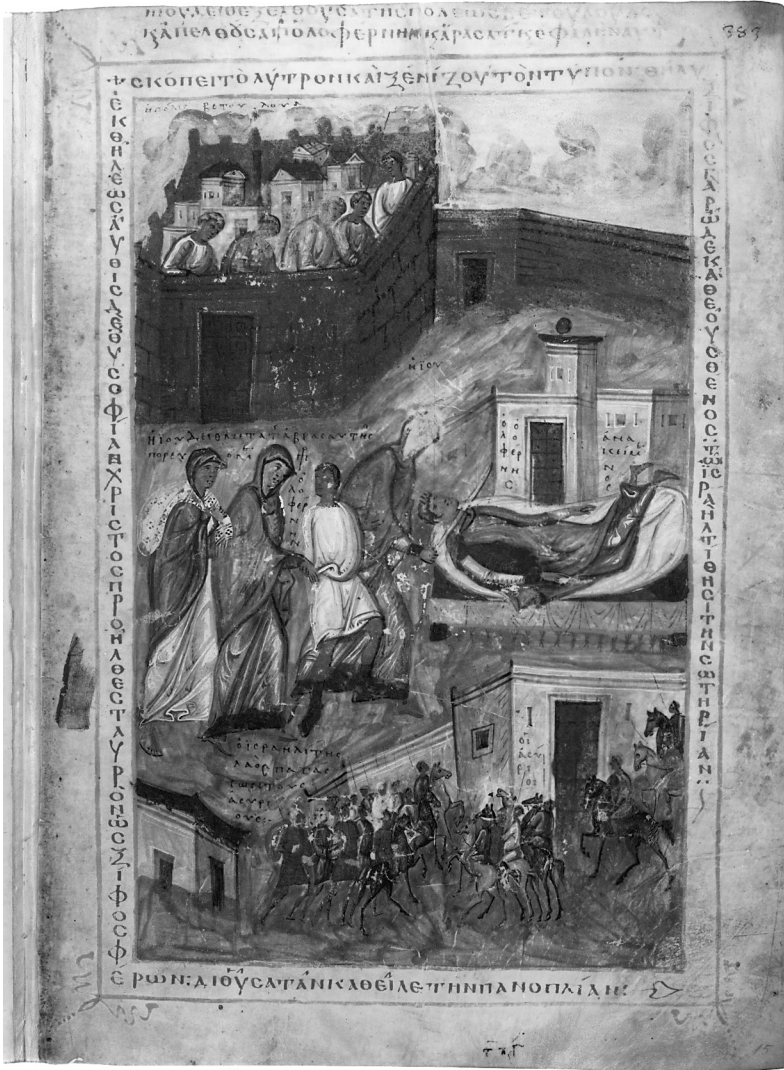


Figure 2.1 A miniature from the Bible of Patricius Leo in Rome, Codex Reg. Gr. 1, fol. 383, showing the decapitation of Holofernes (from the book of Judith). Copyright Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

king's chamberlain Haman and thus institutes the festival of Purim. It differs from Hebrew Esther in two principal ways. First, it contains six additional sections, which add narrative content as well as amplify aspects of the Hebrew story, and, second, it adds approximately fifty references to God to the Hebrew story in which God is not mentioned in any explicit way. A colophon attributes the Greek text to one Lysimachus, an Alexandrian Jew who lived in Jerusalem, though opinions are divided as to the historicity of this attribution. Additions B and E, ostensibly the texts of



Figure 2.2 *Judith and her Maidservant*. Sandro Botticelli (1444–1510), Uffizi, Florence.
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Persian edicts, were composed in Greek; the others may have had a Hebrew source. The latest possible date is the late first century CE, when the additions were used by Josephus in his paraphrase of the Esther story.

Susanna is one of three additions to the biblical book of Daniel. It focuses on the plight of a beautiful and pious woman married to a wealthy and influential man in Babylonia. One hot day Susanna is entrapped in her garden by two elders who offer her an unsavory ultimatum: either she lies with them or they report that she has had a rendezvous with a young man. She refuses, is accused, tried, and about to be



Figure 2.3 *Susanna and the Elders*. Jacob Jordaens, 1653. Photo Hans Petersen.
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executed for adultery when she is saved by the young Daniel who exposes the duplicity of the elders. In the Septuagint and the Vulgate the story of Susanna follows the last chapter of Daniel and is numbered [chapter 13](#). In Theodotion, Old Latin, Coptic and Arabic it is a prefix to the [first chapter](#) of Daniel or an insert before Daniel 2. The latest possible date is the Old Greek text of Daniel, early first century BCE. The original language was likely Greek.

Two other additions to Daniel, *Bel and The Dragon*, are stories that ridicule idolatry. In *Bel*, Daniel uncovers the artifice which made it appear that the idol *Bel* was consuming copious amounts of food and drink, thereby proving to Cyrus of Persia that *Bel* is a mere statue unworthy of worship. In *The Dragon*, Daniel proves that the revered dragon is mortal by feeding him a concoction of boiled pitch, fat, and hair and thereby causing the dragon to burst. As punishment, Daniel is thrown into the lion's den, where he survives a week with God's assistance. In Greek versions of Daniel these tales appear at the end of [chapter 12](#); in the Vulgate they appear after Susanna, as [chapter 14](#) of Daniel. Their date, provenance, and original language are uncertain.

Didactic

These wisdom texts have close analogues in the biblical wisdom texts of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job.

The Wisdom of Solomon is a wisdom text that professes to be written by King Solomon and touches on a range of topics including theology, Torah, observance, nature, history, and society. Internal evidence suggests that it was written in Greek, probably in Alexandria in the first century BCE, and draws on the language and theories of Stoicism, as well as traditional Jewish wisdom material.

The Wisdom of Ben Sira (Sirach), also referred to as Ecclesiasticus, deals extensively with a variety of issues pertaining to social and religious life. It is somewhat notorious for its derogatory statements about women (Eisenbaum 1998: 299). It was written in Jerusalem by a Jewish scribe named Joshua ben Sira in approximately 180 BCE, during the reign of the High Priest Simon II (cf. Sirach 50:1–24). The book was translated from Hebrew into Greek by Ben Sira's grandson in 132 BCE. Four fragmentary early medieval Hebrew manuscripts were found in Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century, and several other Hebrew fragments were found at Qumran.

Devotional/liturgical

The Prayer of Manasseh is a brief penitential prayer attributed to the wicked King Manasseh of Judah (cf. 2 Chronicles 33:11–13). It is dated to the last two centuries BCE and survives in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian, and Ethiopic. The original language is uncertain.

The Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Young Jews are two short additions to Daniel that are inserted in the Vulgate between Daniel 3:23 and 24. They are attributed to Azariah and his two friends, Hananiah and Mishael, after they had been thrown into fiery furnace. The prayer echoes the national laments of the canonical psalms such as 74, 79, 80. These texts were probably composed in Hebrew in the second or first century BCE.

Others

The Letter of Jeremiah claims to have been sent by Jeremiah in 597 BCE to the Israelites about to be taken as captives to Babylon, to warn them against idolatry. The original language is probably Hebrew. It is dated to the early second century BCE, based on the manuscript found in Cave 7 at Qumran from 100 BCE. The provenance is uncertain, although familiarity with Babylonian religion implies Mesopotamia.

2 Esdras (4 Ezra), the sole example of apocalyptic literature in the Apocrypha, has its closest parallels in the pseudepigraphical Enoch literature. The main part of the text is a series of seven revelations in which the seer is instructed by the angel Uriel. The book has a complicated history of transmission. The author of [chapters 3–14](#) was an unknown Palestinian Jew who probably wrote in Hebrew or Aramaic near the end of the first century CE, a dating based on the identification of the three

heads of the eagle in [chapter 13](#) with the Flavian emperors. The Semitic original and almost all of the Greek translation have been lost and are known only from translations into Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian and several Old Latin versions. 2 Esdras is not in the Septuagint; the Latin versions have two additional chapters before and two after, written later by unknown Christian authors.

Baruch purports to have been written during the Babylonian captivity by the companion and secretary of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 32:12; 36:4), as a confessional reading for feast days (1:14). In the Septuagint it is an appendix to the book of Jeremiah. Composite authorship has been suggested, due to variety in viewpoint, literary form, and language. The original language is Hebrew; the final redaction can be dated to the mid-second century BCE.

Psalms 151, attributed to David on the occasion of his conquest of Goliath, is extant in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Syriac. The psalm is found in the Hebrew scroll of biblical psalms from Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs^a) dating to the early first century CE.

4 Maccabees is an appendix in the Slavonic Orthodox canon and is present in some Septuagint manuscripts. The first, and shorter, part (1:1 – 3:18) is a discourse on the superiority of ‘religious reason’ over the emotions and the former’s compatibility with Mosaic law. The [second part](#), 3:19 – 18:24, illustrates these points by describing the torture and martyrdom of the elderly priest Eleazar, seven brothers, and their mother during the prelude to the Maccabean revolt. The source for this section is 2 Maccabees. The book was written in Greek, perhaps at Alexandria or Antioch, in the mid-first century to early second century CE.

MAJOR THEMES

The Apocrypha are important not only for the history of the canonization process but also, perhaps primarily, for insight into the concerns, beliefs, and traditions of second-temple Judaism. For this reason they provide a crucial link between biblical religion and the normative forms of Judaism and Christianity as they developed in the first centuries of the common era. We shall focus on four themes that illustrate this point: reflections on biblical events and figures, the understanding of the covenantal relationship between God and Israel, views of death and afterlife, and the issue of Jewish identity in a Hellenistic environment.

Biblical events and figures

Apocryphal books situate themselves explicitly *vis-à-vis* biblical events and figures in a number of ways. First, works such as the Letter of Jeremiah, Baruch, and the Additions to Daniel and Esther build on or add to biblical books. Second, some historical books, most notably 1 Esdras, retell portions of biblical history. Third, several books feature recitations of biblical history. Sirach 44–50 describes the achievements of the ‘fathers’, beginning with Enoch and concluding with a lengthy paean to Simon son of Onias, High Priest from 219 to 196 BCE, as the climax of this long line. Wisdom 10 and 11 summarizes primordial history to demonstrate

that just as wisdom was the instrument through which God helped the righteous in the past (9:17), so too will she help those who cleave to her in the present. Achior, the leader of Ammonites who converts to Judaism at the conclusion of the book of Judith, recites a brief summary of Israelite history in order to convey to the general Holofernes that success or failure in battle against Bethulia will depend not so much on the prowess of his own troops as on the status of Israel's relationship with God (5:17–21).

Finally, specific individuals are singled out. In 2 Esdras (4 Ezra) 6:7–10 the patriarchs mark the division of the ages: 'From Abraham to Isaac, because from him were born Jacob and Esau, for Jacob's hand held Esau's heel from the beginning. Now Esau is the end of this age, and Jacob is the beginning of the age that follows.' More chillingly, Judith seeks to emulate Simeon (Genesis 34), who murderously avenged the rape of his sister Dinah (Judith 9:2). Judith also resembles Deborah (Judges 4:4) in her leadership role among the people of Bethulia (Judith 8:9–36), and Jael (Judges 4:17–22; 5:24–7) in using decapitation as the means by which she vanquishes the foe (Judith 13). These biblical figures are role models for personal action and for understanding Israel's covenantal relationship with God.

Covenantal relationship between God and Israel

As Achior explains to Holofernes, Israel's success or failure in the world is entirely determined by her status *vis-à-vis* God. If Israel sins, she is punished by God through a particular military power. This view is expressed in Azariah's lament 'We have sinned and broken your law . . . So all that you have brought upon us, and all that you have done to us, you have done by a true judgment. You have handed us over to our enemies, lawless and hateful rebels, and to an unjust king, the most wicked in all the world' (Prayer of Azariah 5–8). If Israel repents, however, she will be rescued from her enemies. In the words of Tobit to his son Tobias, 'God will again have mercy on them and God will bring them back . . . so now, my children, serve God faithfully and do what is pleasing in his sight' (Tobit 14:5, 9).

Death and resurrection

Personal sin and righteousness, punishment and reward, are discussed in terms of the individual's death and afterlife. The most pathetic example is Manasseh, who confesses to innumerable sins and implores the Lord for kindness, begging that he not be destroyed or condemned 'to the depths of the earth' (Prayer of Manasses 13). Specific beliefs concerning death and afterlife vary. According to Sirach 41:10–11, 'Whatever comes from earth returns to earth; so the ungodly go from curse to destruction . . . The human body is a fleeting thing, but a virtuous name will never be blotted out.' Wisdom of Solomon concurs: 'these mortals . . . made of earth . . . after a little while go to the earth from which all mortals are taken' (15:8). These sentiments echo the views of biblical wisdom texts (e.g., Ecclesiastes 9:1–6).

A more elaborate view is found in 2 Esdras (4 Ezra): 'When the decisive decree has gone out from the Most High that a person shall die, as the spirit leaves the body to return again to him who gave it, first of all it adores the glory of the Most

High. If it is one of those who have shown scorn and have not kept the way of the Most High . . . such spirits . . . shall immediately wander about in torments, always grieving and sad, in seven ways' (7:78–80). The righteous, on the other hand, while similarly separated from their mortal bodies, will see glory and have rest in seven orders, in which they will enjoy their immortality (7:88–96).

Most striking, however, are the numerous and explicit references to resurrection. Resurrection is not explicitly mentioned in the biblical corpus though it is used as a metaphor for the restoration of Israel (e.g., Ezekiel 37). Second Maccabees attributes belief in resurrection to the seven martyred brothers. The second brother, for example, declares that 'the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws' (2 Maccabees 7:9; cf. 7:14). The author of 2 Maccabees declares that Judas Maccabaeus also believed in the resurrection, as indicated by the collection of 2,000 drachmas of silver that he took up as a sin offering for the dead, 'For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead' (12:43–5).

Jewish identity in a Hellenistic world

The apocryphal texts demonstrate acute awareness of the Babylonian conquest, which left a sizeable Jewish population living outside the land of Israel. Tobit, for example, instructs his son Tobias to take his children to Media, for 'all of our kindred, inhabitants of the land of Israel, will be scattered and taken as captives from the good land; and the whole land of Israel will be desolate, even Samaria and Jerusalem will be desolate. And the temple of God in it will be burned to the ground and it will be desolate for a while' (14:3–4).

A major threat to the exiled community is idolatry. The Letter of Jeremiah warns the exiles in Babylonia 'To beware of becoming at all like the foreigners or of letting fear for these gods possess you when you see the multitude before and behind them worshipping them' (5–6). As in prophetic texts (e.g., Isaiah 48), idols and idolaters come in for critique and mockery. Wisdom 13:10, for example, describes idolaters as miserable beings with their hopes set on dead things, namely, 'the works of human hands, gold and silver fashioned with skill, and the likenesses of animals, or a useless stone, the work of an ancient hand.' Bel and The Dragon gleefully narrate the discrediting of these two pagan gods. In a different vein, the emphasis on prayer in the moralistic narratives (e.g., Judith 9; Esther Addition C), and on God's providential care for his people whether in the land or outside it may also be intended to deter idolatry (e.g., Wisdom 19:22).

Apocryphal texts provide concrete guidance for maintaining Jewish identity in these circumstances. Keeping the law is paramount. Ben Sira urges his readers, 'Do not be ashamed of the law of the Most High and his covenant (42:2; cf. Baruch 4:1). Wisdom is equated with Torah; the wise is the one who studies and observes Torah (Sirach 24:23; Wisdom 9:18; cf. Marcus 1966).

In their piety and knowledge of the Law, the heroes of the apocryphal narratives exemplify the ideal Jew (e.g., Susanna 3; Tobit 1:8). Esther (Addition C; 14:16) and Judith (10:5; 12:19) maintain the dietary laws under the most adverse circumstances.

Also important was the observance of holidays such as Purim (Greek Esther) and Hanukkah (2 Maccabees 2:16–19), which commemorate victories of Israel against foreign political, military and spiritual forces. Such victory sometimes required compromising laws such as Sabbath observance. As the Maccabean leader Mattathias noted, ‘If we all do as our kindred have done and refuse to fight with the Gentiles for our lives and for our ordinances, they will quickly destroy us from the earth . . . Let us fight against anyone who comes to attack us on the Sabbath day; let us not all die as our kindred died in their hiding places’ (1 Maccabees 2:40–1).

But it is the practice of endogamy that receives the greatest attention. In 1 Esdras 8:69–70, as in the late biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Ezra laments that ‘the holy race has been mixed with the alien peoples of the land.’ Tobit emphatically instructs his son Tobias to ‘marry a woman from among the descendants of your ancestors; do not marry a foreign woman, who is not of your father’s tribe; for we are the descendants of the prophets’ (4:12). Most poignant is Esther, who confides to God about her marriage to the Persian king Artaxerxes, ‘You have knowledge of all things, and you know that I hate the splendour of the wicked and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and of any alien’ (Addition C; 14:15).

As the example of Esther illustrates, the apocryphal women are positive paradigms of diaspora Jewish behavior. From the moralistic narratives in particular we learn that the ideal diaspora Jew is learned, pious, observant of the Law, and, above all, married to a kinsman.⁴ Not that apocryphal women are entirely benign in their relationships with men. True, the taint of adultery that Susanna brings to her household, and the fatal effects of marriage on Sarah’s first seven bridegrooms (Tobit 3:8) were not the fault of these two women. On the other hand, Esther’s actions quite intentionally led to the death of Haman and to a pogrom in which many non-Jews died (Esther 9:11–15) and Judith’s decapitation of Holofernes was meticulously planned (Judith 8:32–4; 9:9–10). The danger that these women pose affects primarily the impious (in the case of Susanna) or the enemy, but not righteous members of their own communities. They therefore represent the ideal Israel, which vanquishes the enemy and fiercely protects its own unique identity in partnership with God.

CONCLUSION

The Apocrypha are fascinating not only for their role in the vagaries and controversies that surrounded the lengthy canonization processes within Jewish and Christian communities but also for the insight they provide into the travails, concerns, and beliefs of second-temple Jews as they considered their place in the culture, politics, and religious systems of the Hellenistic world. These texts both illustrate the development of biblical beliefs such as covenant and provide a backdrop against which the beliefs of Christians and Jews in the first centuries of the Common Era may be understood. Perhaps most interesting is the fact that in reflecting the reality of a sizeable Jewish Diaspora, these texts sound some contemporary notes concerning the ways and means of maintaining religious identity in the face of a dominant culture.

NOTES

- 1 *TaNaKh* is the Hebrew acronym that summarizes the three-part content of the Jewish canon: *Torah* (Pentateuch), *Neviim* (the prophets), and *Ketubim* (miscellaneous writings).
- 2 All quotations from the Bible and Apocrypha are taken from *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Wayne A. Meeks (general ed.), New York: HarperCollins, 1993.
- 3 The reference to Nebuchadnezzar as the Assyrian emperor signals that Judith is not historiography but fiction (Wills 1995: 134).
- 4 According to the Septuagint, Esther, though married to Artaxerxes, may have been Mordecai's intended. The Septuagint describes Esther explicitly as Mordecai's wife (2:7), in contrast to the Masoretic Text, which states that he took her to be his daughter. Moore (1977: 186) argues that the Greek may be the translator's midreading of the Hebrew consonants (*br*), which are the same for 'daughter' as for 'house' (Moore 1977: 186). Nevertheless, the Greek is suggestive of the need to associate Esther as closely as possible with Mordecai.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE NEW TESTAMENT



Christopher Tuckett

The collection we call 'the New Testament' is something of a mixed bag. The New Testament today comprises 27 different texts that vary considerably in terms of their length, their scope, their aims, and their genre. It contains four 'gospels', giving narrative accounts of parts of the life and ministry of Jesus; there is one book (Acts) that presents a (somewhat selective!) account of the history of the early Christian church in its first 30 or so years. There are then a number of letters, many purporting to be by the apostle Paul, as well as others written under the name of other leading figures (e.g. Peter, James) or anonymously (e.g. Hebrews); and within the group of letters in the New Testament there is considerable variation in that some are genuine letters written to specific communities in specific situations (virtually all of Paul's own letters), whereas others are more like general treatises where the letter form seems to be more peripheral (e.g. James). The last book of the New Testament, Revelation, has the form of an 'apocalypse' comprising for the most part a great series of visions of the heavenly realm. The one thing all these writings have in common is that they all stem from a very early period in the history of the Christian movement. Indeed they do (by and large) represent the earliest Christian writings we possess, and they provide our prime sources for seeking to gain information about the start of the Christian movement and its 'founder', Jesus of Nazareth. Nevertheless (like almost every assertion in biblical studies today!) such a claim may need some qualification. How early is the 'early period' from which they come? And how broad is the period?

DATES

Almost all the New Testament documents can be confidently dated to the first century CE, with only the occasional exception such as 2 Peter, which may come from the second. However, it is also clear that they do not date from the *very* earliest period in the history of early Christianity.

The earliest New Testament writings are probably the letters of Paul. These were probably written during a period from c.48/49 until the mid-50s. The precise dating of each letter is of course debated. But clearly, the letters of Paul do not come from his earliest time as a Christian: Paul had been 'converted' to the Christian

movement some 15 years or so before the time of the earliest letter we have from him (probably 1 Thessalonians). Thus Paul's letters let us see something of himself only as a Christian of some years' standing.

The dates of the other letters in the New Testament are much less certain. A number of letters purportedly written by Paul were probably written in his name by a later writer and hence stem from a later period after Paul's death (see below). Some of the more general letters (e.g. James, Hebrews), simply by virtue of the fact that they are so general, are notoriously difficult to date. In part, too, assigning a date to them is dependent on other decisions about their authorship. It is though very unlikely that any of these other letters are to be dated any earlier than Paul's letters, and they all come from a time no earlier than the second half of the first century.

The same probably applies in the case of the more overtly 'historical' books of the New Testament, that is, the gospels and Acts, which purport to give accounts of earlier historical events in the life of Jesus or in the life of the earliest Christian community. The earliest gospel is almost certainly the gospel of Mark, probably to be dated to around 70 CE. (There is dispute about whether Mark was written before or after the fall of the city of Jerusalem in 70 CE.) Further, Mark's gospel was probably one of the sources used by the writers of the gospels of Matthew and Luke: hence these two gospels must have been written after Mark, probably in the 80s (or perhaps 90s). John's gospel presents many peculiar difficulties of interpretation, not least of which is the fact that it is so different at almost every level from the other three (so-called 'synoptic') gospels. Again, most scholars today would date the gospel well into the last quarter of the first century, since it appears to presuppose some kind of formal, institutionalized split between the Christian community and the Jewish synagogues (cf. John 9.22; 16.2), which, as far as we can tell, did not take place until the mid-80s (or perhaps even later). Acts was written by Luke as a 'sequel' to his gospel, and hence probably also stems from the 80s at the earliest.

Thus all the 'historical' books of the New Testament are describing events that lie some 40 years or more in the past from the point of view of their authors at the time of writing. Some may be written 60–70 years after the events concerned. These texts, as mentioned earlier, are probably the earliest sources for the history concerned that we have available. But we must not lose sight of the fact that they are themselves not documents coming from the very earliest period itself. They are from a generation, or two generations, later. And this will inevitably at times colour our assessment of their value as historical sources for the events they describe.

AUTHORSHIP

Who wrote these books? Just as the documents themselves represent something of a mixed bag, so too their authors comprise a somewhat miscellaneous group. Indeed, we should probably go further and say that in a large number of instances we simply do not know who wrote these texts. For example, a striking feature of all four gospels is that they are anonymous. Unlike a large number of similar writings in the Graeco-Roman world, the Christian gospel writers never reveal their identity. (The sole exception may be John's gospel, where, in a note clearly added by someone

other than the writer of the bulk of the gospel, it is said that the so-called 'beloved disciple' was the author of the gospel: see John 21.24. But this does not help very much since, notoriously, the 'beloved disciple' in John remains a tantalizingly unclear figure who is never explicitly named. In any case, most scholars today would regard with some scepticism the claim that a companion of Jesus wrote the whole of the fourth gospel, if only because it is so unlike the other gospels and seems to show no knowledge of key events in Jesus' life.)

We call the gospel writers Matthew, Mark, Luke and John by tradition, and these names are today always used to refer to these gospels. However, the traditional identification of them seems implausible. The author of the gospel of Mark is unlikely to have been the John Mark of Acts (as is probably implied by the naming of him as 'Mark' in the tradition) if only because he seems at times blissfully unaware of details of Palestinian geography and customs (see Mark 5.1, where Gerasa seems to be assumed to be near the Sea of Galilee, whereas it is in fact some 30 miles away; or Mark 10.11–12, where it seems to be assumed that Jewish women could divorce their husbands, whereas in fact they could not). The author of Matthew's gospel seems to have to rely on Mark for information and is thus unlikely to have been the Matthew who was one of Jesus' own closest companions. The author of Luke's gospel is almost certainly also the author of Acts; he *may* have been a companion of Paul (as the tradition claims), though there are formidable difficulties with such a view due to the great differences between the portrait of Paul that emerges from Acts and the picture of Paul we get from his own letters. The author of John's gospel is, as we have noted already, unlikely to have been an immediate disciple of Jesus, if only because so much of the material in the synoptic gospels is missing from John.

The likelihood is therefore that all the historical books of the New Testament are not eyewitness accounts of the events described. They are all written by people some time after the events, a fact that must affect one's assessment of the books concerned.

The authorship of the letters is also disputed. Several are written in the name of the apostle Paul. However, it seems clear that not all the letters attributed to Paul are by Paul himself. Significant differences of style, language and at times important ideas make this extremely likely. The so-called 'Pastoral epistles' (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus) form a group of three letters, very similar to each other but in turn very different in style, tone and at times theology from Paul's own. They are thus the work of a later writer, writing in Paul's name, claiming Paul's authority (perhaps even writing to rehabilitate Paul at a time when Paul's authority was being questioned), but not written by Paul himself. The exact extent of the corpus of such letters in the New Testament, purportedly by Paul but in fact written by someone else, is disputed. (The technical word for such letters is 'pseudonymous'.) Most would include Ephesians in this category of pseudonymous Pauline letters; many would also include Colossians and 2 Thessalonians. The unquestionably genuine Pauline corpus thus comprises only seven letters (Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon).

The authorship of other letters in the New Testament is also disputed. The letter to the Hebrews (traditionally ascribed to Paul) is anonymous. Its ideas, especially its highly distinctive presentation of the person of Jesus in the category of a high priest, are very different from Paul's, and hence the author is almost certainly not

Paul, though some link with a Pauline circle is not impossible. (At the end of the text, 'Timothy' is mentioned [Heb 13.23], and Timothy was evidently a well-known member of the Pauline circle.) The letters ascribed to Peter may also be pseudonymous. (In any case, 1 Peter and 2 Peter are not by the same author, as is fairly clear on grounds of style.) The Johannine letters (1–3 John) are stylistically and thematically very close to the fourth gospel, and hence may stem from the same 'circle'. The so-called 'letter of James' *may* come from James the brother of Jesus: the author probably intended that to be understood in using the name, but whether it is accurate or not is unclear. (There is, for example, virtually no reference to Jesus at all in the letter of James.) The book of Revelation claims to be by a 'John' (Rev 1.4), but further identification of who is meant by this (very common!) name is not clear from the book.

All in all, large parts of the New Testament are not written by people directly connected with Jesus or the very earliest period of the Christian church. (This could apply even to Paul: Paul was 'converted' after the death of Jesus.) Rather, many New Testament books stem from second- or third-generation Christians, writing a little time after the foundational events of the Christian church and reflecting on them. Some of the authors would clearly like to be seen as earlier authoritative figures in that they write in the name of such figures. But the fact remains that large parts of the New Testament were written by Christians *after* the initial period.

Despite all these caveats, it remains the case that the New Testament texts are the earliest Christian writings we have, at least for the most part. They are not uniformly early, as we have seen. Moreover, there are one or two writings from early Christians that are not now part of the New Testament but are probably earlier in date than the latest New Testament writings. There is a small manual of church order known as the *Didache*, the full text of which was only discovered in the nineteenth century and which many today would regard as a very early, first-century document. So too the letter known as 1 *Clement*, a document written by the bishop of Rome in the 90s to the Christian church at Corinth, is to be dated at the end of the first century. Both texts probably pre-date a New Testament text such as 2 Peter. Nevertheless, the New Testament texts by and large constitute the earliest Christian texts we have.

GAPS IN OUR KNOWLEDGE

It is however also clear that the New Testament texts do not give us anything like a comprehensive picture of the earliest days of the Christian movement. The New Testament is dominated, directly or indirectly, by the figure of Paul. As we have seen, there are seven undisputed genuine letters of Paul in the New Testament; in addition, there are several letters written in his name; further, the story in the book of Acts is dominated for the second half (and more) of its compass by the figure of Paul as Luke focuses almost exclusively on Paul's exploits in telling his story.

All this may have its own 'justification' at one level in that Paul was clearly an important figure within the new Christian movement. On the other hand, we should not lose sight of the fact that Paul's real influence in the first century may not have been quite so all-powerful. We can see very clearly from his letters (much less easily

from Acts!) that Paul was frequently engaged in fierce arguments with other Christians, and the likelihood is that he did not always win such arguments. Paul's own theology was clearly controversial in the first century, and not accepted by all Christians. A lot of evidence suggests that within early Christianity Paul may have been something of an isolated figure whose influence may have been somewhat peripheral. Certainly we know that, at a later period, Paul was regarded by some Christians with intense suspicion, and it may have been in such a situation that the Pastoral letters were written in Paul's name, seeking to show that Paul really was 'safe' and 'sound'. The picture we get from the New Testament texts alone may thus give us a potentially slightly misleading picture of earliest Christianity.

We should also note that the New Testament does not give us anything like a comprehensive coverage of the writings of early Christians. As already noted, there may well be a few texts from the first century that are not in the New Testament. But we also know of the existence of other texts now lost. It seems that Paul wrote a letter to the Laodiceans (see Col 4.16): if this letter really did exist, it has not survived. We know from Paul's letters to the Corinthians that he must have written other letters to them, apart from the ones we have in the New Testament (see 1 Cor 5.9; 2 Cor 2.3); it is clear too that the Corinthians wrote to him (see 1 Cor 7.1). Clearly then we do not have all the letters Paul wrote (and none he received). Similarly, Luke mentions in the preface to his gospel that he knew of 'many' who had already undertaken an enterprise similar to the one he himself was starting in beginning his account of Jesus' life (Luke 1.1); and presumably the 'many' cannot have been just Mark! It would seem that there may have been a number of such texts in circulation at the time. So, too, many scholars have suggested that both Matthew and Luke had access to another source apart from Mark: this source is usually known as 'Q', but if (as seems likely) it existed in written form, no copy of it has survived. In addition, we know of the existence of a number of other texts, for example the 'Gospel of the Hebrews', from the fact that various church fathers quote them, even though no manuscript of the texts survives today. It is then clear that the texts that have survived represent only a part of the literature produced by the earliest Christians.

Further, we know of great gaps in our knowledge of early Christianity that are shown, but not filled, by the New Testament. The origins of Egyptian Christianity, or Roman Christianity, remain totally obscure to us. The New Testament documents indicate that Christianity reached Egypt, and Rome, very early. (For Egypt, see Acts 18.24ff. where Apollos suddenly appears in the story as a Christian from Alexandria; for Rome, one has the evidence of Paul's letter to Rome for the existence of a church there in the mid-50s.) Yet on the questions how or when these communities were founded, we are entirely in the dark.

The New Testament writings then give us a somewhat haphazard collection of first-century Christian texts. They provide us with (mostly) our only sources for discovering information about the early days of the new Christian movement; but as sources they are at times tantalizingly incomplete.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AS A CHRISTIAN COLLECTION

One element however that binds all the New Testament texts together is the fact that they are all Christian texts. They are all written by people who were adherents of the new Christian movement. In one way this is of course trite and obvious. But it does have further implications, for example, if one wishes to use these texts to discover aspects of the history of the period. All the accounts of Jesus' life in the gospels are 'biased' in that they are written by Christians. Sadly perhaps, we have virtually nothing written about Jesus by contemporary non-Christian writers. So too the earliest history of the church evidently made almost no impact on other authors in the Hellenistic or Jewish environment. (The Jewish historian Josephus never mentions the Christian movement, except in one paragraph about Jesus, though the authenticity of this is heavily disputed, and in a brief note about the execution of James. Hellenistic authors of the period do not mention the new Christian movement prior to the references to Christians being blamed for the fire at Rome during the reign of Nero in the mid-60s.)

In the case of the gospels, in particular, this does have a potentially enormous effect on the nature of these texts. The one common element in the (at times very great) variety shown by early Christians was the claim made by them all in relation to the 'resurrection' of Jesus. Christians believed that the Jesus who had lived and preached in Palestine and been crucified on a Roman cross had been 'raised' to a new kind of life by God. As such, he was alive and still speaking to his followers in the present. For the gospel writers, therefore, any distinction some might make as historians between past and present, between what Jesus might have said in the past and what could be said today, would have appeared rather unreal. For the evangelists, it was the same Jesus who had worked in Palestine prior to his death who was now alive and still speaking to his followers. As a result, the evangelists evidently felt free to change their traditions to reflect their beliefs about the aliveness of Jesus with a freedom that many people find on first encounter a little disconcerting.

Perhaps this is clearest in the case of the gospel of John, where it seems that the original Jesus tradition has been transposed and transformed into a completely new setting, with the language and categories changed to reflect that setting. Thus Jesus now talks in long discourses, rather than in short parables or aphorisms; and he ceases to talk of a future 'Kingdom of God', but rather of 'eternal life' available in the present, and of himself as the direct object of faith and commitment. All this is quite different from the picture in the synoptic gospels, so much so that the two pictures can scarcely be reconciled at the level of the pre-Easter Jesus. Nevertheless, the picture in John reflects one way in which the fundamental conviction of the aliveness of Jesus after Easter, and the basic belief that Jesus was still speaking to his church, enabled at least one Christian writer to refashion and re-present the gospel story in a radically different way. Rewriting on a less radical, but no less real, scale can also be seen in the other gospels; for example, Matthew and Luke rewrite Mark's account, at times with considerable freedom. All this means that, as source books for the past, the Christian gospels may tell us as much, if not more, about their authors and their situations as they do about the events they are purportedly describing, namely the life and ministry of Jesus prior to the resurrection.

The other thing to bear in mind is that the New Testament is not only a collection of Christian texts; it is also a collection made by Christians. The process of separating off these books and forming them into a 'New Testament' was one undertaken in the church by Christians for Christians. The details of that process are often not very clear. It seems likely that the process was not always very self-conscious. Often the process, like the New Testament itself, may have been more than a little haphazard. Some books may simply have been lost in the course of time. Others were simply accepted, almost without any self-conscious evaluation at all. Why in the end some books 'made it' into the New Testament canon and others did not is unclear. Perhaps whether or not a book was written by an 'apostle' was significant, though this is by no means certain. (For example, the gospels of Mark and Luke were never claimed to have been written by apostles, yet no one really worried too much!) Antiquity was certainly important for some: the New Testament books were valued because they were the oldest documents available. Also their historical reliability was important (even though today one might assess that 'reliability' rather differently!). So too their theological 'orthodoxy' was relevant, though it is notoriously difficult to define what is meant by orthodoxy, especially in the earliest period of Christian history. Nevertheless, at least one book, the *Gospel of Peter*, was, according to a story in Eusebius's *Church History* (a fourth-century account of the history of the church), barred from use in public worship by a bishop Serapion in the second century because it was felt to be doctrinally suspect. (It implies the idea that Jesus had not really died on the cross.) Above all though what seemed to count was whether a document was used everywhere and universally in the church.

The main bulk of the New Testament canon was implicitly agreed very early and with a remarkable lack of controversy. For example, the fourfold gospel canon was accepted by the end of the second century and no one thereafter appears to question it (even though it is clear that there were a number of other texts claiming to be 'gospels' current at the time). Discussions about the precise limits of the canon, at the 'edges' so to speak, continued on for a very long time. The book of Revelation, for example, remained a matter of dispute for several centuries. Nevertheless, the main outline of the New Testament canon was agreed by the middle of the fourth century and has remained fixed ever since.

That said, it should not be forgotten that the process of forming the books of the New Testament into a single 'canonical' collection only starts some time after the writing of the New Testament texts themselves. The New Testament writers themselves were scarcely conscious of the fact that they were writing texts that would become part of sacred scripture for the whole Christian church. For first-century Christians, 'scripture' meant primarily the Jewish scriptures. Paul no doubt intended his letters to be read, and to be taken, very seriously. Yet he does not appear to think that he is supplementing and expanding Jewish scriptures with his letters. So too the freedom with which, say, Matthew and Luke use Mark as a source in writing their gospels shows clearly that they at least did not regard Mark as any very sacred text. The freedom they exercise implies precisely the opposite. Perhaps the only New Testament book that shows any self-awareness of claiming some kind of 'scriptural' authority for itself is the book of Revelation: see Revelation 22.18–19 and the

warning about adding anything to, or subtracting anything from, what has been written, a claim similar to others made elsewhere about Jewish scripture (cf. Deut 4.2).

IDEAS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament texts show at times a bewildering diversity in their 'theologies' and ideas. The very nature of the Christian movement as something new within Judaism meant that the early Christians were inevitably struggling from the start to determine what was normative for their beliefs and what was debatable, what was acceptable and what was 'out of bounds', how one could determine what was right and what was wrong.

Christianity grew out of Judaism, and so Christians could – and did – draw on Judaism for ideas and norms in this respect. Indeed, many of those norms and ideas were accepted in toto without any questioning at all. Christians adopted the Jewish ideas of God (i.e. 'theo-log $\acute{\epsilon}$ ' strictly speaking) without ever questioning it in any way: ideas such as monotheism (God as Creator) were simply assumed as axiomatic. The same is the case in relation to a Jewish eschatological framework of thought: Christians such as Paul simply assumed this as self-evidently true and never stopped to discuss or defend it, even when writing to non-Jews. So too much of Jewish ethical teaching was assumed.

Yet soon a major issue forced Christians to ask awkward questions about their Jewish roots. This was the influx of non-Jews (i.e. Gentiles) into the Christian movement, leading to the question being raised: should Gentiles become Jews before/when they became Christians? This of course had very practical consequences for males because it involved the question of circumcision: should Gentiles have to be circumcised if they wished to join the Christian movement? The answer ultimately was no. But this inevitably led to an awareness of some difference between Christians and Jews. At a very visible level (e.g. in public baths), not all Christian men looked like Jewish men any longer.

As Christians struggled to resolve such issues, they were inevitably forced to reassess different parts of their traditions, Jewish and non-Jewish, to see what could/should be maintained, what jettisoned, what arguments were justified, what were not, how one could/should argue, and so on. And it is this state of what is at times quite a turbulent situation that one sees reflected in the New Testament, especially in the Pauline letters.

It is perhaps not in the least surprising to find a lack of uniformity in the New Testament. At times there is even what seems like outright contradiction. For example, Paul argues passionately for the priority of what he calls 'faith' over what he terms 'works', or 'works of the law', as the basis for salvation (see Rom 4). The author of the letter of James on the other hand claims that 'works' are all important and that faith without works is dead (James 2.20). The disagreement is in one way rather formal and artificial: James and Paul do not necessarily mean precisely the same thing by the same words 'faith'/'works'. Nevertheless, there is an element of tension here, which in James is quite explicit (and James is probably in part responding to Pauline Christianity). As already noted, we see Paul himself in his

letters frequently having heated debates with other Christians about what are regarded as key issues of the day, not the least of which is very often the question of how far some of the Jewish practices are still to be regarded as obligatory in the Christian church.

We also see Christians in the New Testament coming out with 'answers' to 'questions' that are at best tentative and certainly at times tangential to each other. For example, early Christians were convinced that in some way or other, Jesus' death on the cross was to be seen not just a judicial execution, nor even as only a miscarriage of justice perpetrated on an innocent man. Rather, it came to be seen as somehow having positive significance in itself, effecting a real change in the human situation and in the relationship between God and human beings. But precisely what had been achieved, and how Jesus' death on the cross had achieved it, was not so clear. Different writers use different images. Even a single writer like Paul used a riot of different images and 'language games' to describe it. Thus Jesus' death is referred to as a sacrifice, similar to the sin offerings of the Jewish cult (Rom 3.25), or as a Passover sacrifice implying a new act of liberation by God similar to the rescue of the Israelites from Egypt (1 Cor 5.7); it was also a new covenant sacrifice, inaugurating a new covenant relationship, similar to that which brought the Jewish people into existence as the people of God (1 Cor 11.24); it was also a 'price paid' (though it is never said to whom!), leading to the transfer of ownership of Christians who then, like slaves bought in the market place for a price, are now the property of a new master, Christ (1 Cor 6.20; 7.23). All these used images and ideas current at the time to try to express aspects of the new life Christians believed they experienced as a result of Jesus' life and death. There is little if any attempt in the New Testament itself to synthesize all these ideas. And it was the task of later Christians in the early church to try to bring some kind of synthesis in the later creeds and doctrinal statements of the church.

Further, we should remember in reading the New Testament that, when the later process of synthesizing and systematizing took place, it was often undertaken in a thought world and with presuppositions very different from those of the New Testament writers. At the very least, key words and phrases were used in ways, and with meanings, rather different from their usage in the New Testament. For example, language of Jesus as Son of God, used later by Christians to express their conviction that Jesus was fully divine, one in being with the Father, also occurs in the New Testament but arguably with no such clear overtones of divinity attached to the phrase. Talk about individuals as a 'son of God' is thoroughly at home in Judaism, referring variously to a royal figure (see 2 Sam 7.14) or perhaps a righteous person who remains obedient to God through suffering (see Wisd 2-5). No doubt the same language when applied to Jesus was in a state of flux, and may have taken on some significantly new overtones of meaning. But we should always be aware of the dangers of anachronistically reading back the meanings that key phrases came to have in later Christianity into the earlier documents of the New Testament itself.

IMPORTANCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the course of time, the New Testament books were gradually accorded the position and status of holy scripture alongside, and in addition to, the books of Jewish scripture. They came to form a 'New Testament' alongside what came then to be called the 'Old Testament' (though it should be noted that the existence of a New Testament never led to the displacement of Jewish scripture from the Christian Bible: however much Christians wished to stress their differences from Judaism, Christians have never given up their claim to the Jewish scriptures as an integral part of their own Bibles). The status of these books as holy scripture meant that they profoundly affected the whole subsequent history of the Christian church. Any religious tradition in its history constantly relates back to its past to establish elements of continuity, to define itself and to regulate developments. The documents of the New Testament inevitably occupy a key role in these respects in the Christian religion. They are the earliest documents of Christianity that we possess; the 'scriptural' status accorded them reinforces their significance. For all those interested in the Christian religion, these texts will therefore be of foundational significance. Further, for all those interested in the historical roots of the Christian religion, in the historical events, supremely the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, that provided the initial impetus inaugurating the new Christian movement, the New Testament texts will provide us with our primary historical sources (even if, as I have tried to indicate, they must be used with some care).

But equally, in an age that has become suspicious and critical of some old authorities or dogmatic claims, it can be just as important to return to the roots of the Christian tradition, in one way to see how the earliest Christians struggled with the problems and issues facing them at a time when old authorities were being called into question and new structures had to be developed, and in another way to be able to view critically later developments in Christian history. As we look at the earliest Christians once again, we may for example find that some of the more dogmatic claims alleged to be based on their ideas and beliefs are perhaps not as securely founded as others have claimed. It is as part of this constant search for truth, as well as the perennial fascination of the earliest days of the new Christian movement, that the New Testament texts need to be read and studied afresh in every generation.



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PART II

GENRES





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CHAPTER FOUR

NEAR EASTERN MYTHS AND LEGENDS



Stephanie Dalley

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the Bronze Age, before the Judaeen monarchy was established in Jerusalem, some royal courts at cities in Palestine and Canaan were literate in Akkadian cuneiform, a complex system of writing that uses logograms, determinatives and syllables. This spread of literacy is known from a variety of inscribed clay tablets found on archaeological sites in modern Israel, Lebanon and Syria. We now know that the ancient Mesopotamian tradition of writing and literature permeated the whole of western Asia through sites such as Ebla and Byblos in the Early Bronze Age; Mari, Hazor, Megiddo and Hebron in the Middle Bronze Age; Emar, Ugarit and Tell Aphek in the Late Bronze Age, even when Egypt ruled Palestine. It was then largely superseded by Hebrew and Aramaic, written in linear alphabetic script. Briefly intermediate between the Akkadian cuneiform and the linear ways of writing was the cuneiform alphabetic script written on clay, known mainly from Ugarit and so named Ugaritic. It was applied not only to the west Semitic language of that city, but was certainly used far beyond, as we know from finds at Tell Aphek, and it flourished rather briefly in the fourteenth to thirteenth century alongside Akkadian cuneiform. Another script that did not long survive the spread of alphabets was the Hittite hieroglyphic writing used for the Luwian (Indo-European) language, but it persisted into the eighth century at Hamath, for instance. The kings of city-states who still wrote in Hittite hieroglyphs were called by traditional Hittite dynastic names, and these survivals may imply that Hittite mythology too survived into the early Iron Age. Aramaic gradually replaced Ugaritic, Luwian and Akkadian.

Systems of writing

The complex Akkadian and the alphabetic Ugaritic systems of writing and their separate literatures were not linked to political or military domination, and traces of influence from each have been found in different books of the Old Testament. In the case of Akkadian cuneiform, these vestiges have survived partly because they were 'set texts' in the curriculum of scribes in Palestine at the time when Akkadian cuneiform had not yet given way to local alphabetic scripts there, so it was inevitable

that old genres and modes of expression were adapted to new material. The new alphabetic scripts were soon adapted for particular languages and nationalities, so that literary work, both for training scribes and for their compositions, became less international and more nationalistic during the early Iron Age. As far as we can tell, the new alphabetic scripts were used for recording relatively local literature. We find cuneiform Akkadian myths translated into cuneiform Hittite and Hurrian, but we do not find them in alphabetic Ugaritic or Hebrew, nor do we find Ugaritic myths translated into Akkadian. No Egyptian literature has been found in Palestine, nor was it translated in the royal cities of western Asia.

From the early Iron Age onwards the new alphabetic writing was very largely restricted to perishable materials: papyrus, parchment and wooden writing boards, and so the picture we now have is shockingly incomplete. No Phoenician or non-biblical Hebrew myths or legends survive from this time. But literature certainly existed, for the well-structured alphabetic text written on the Moabite Stone in the early ninth century, the Deir Alla inscription written on plaster perhaps in the eighth century, and the inscription on stone from Tell Dan of the late ninth century, all show that the scribes of Syro-Palestine were indeed composing quite sophisticated works in Moabite-Hebrew and Aramaic languages using alphabetic script, early in the Iron Age.

This chapter aims to survey the various myths and legends that circulated in different parts of the ancient Near East. From this wealth of material a few stories are given in outline, and unequivocal biblical connections are pointed out. But it cannot be emphasized too strongly that new material and improved understanding of texts alters the state of scholarship at a fast pace, rendering out of date good editions, translations and the assessments published by scholars in the recent past.

Mesopotamian texts

Sumerian (non-Semitic) and Akkadian (east-Semitic) myths and legends developed during at least 2,000 years in Mesopotamia. Sumerian works, emanating in particular from the cities of Eridu, Ur, Uruk (Erech) and Nippur, were often translated or adapted into Akkadian, and were assimilated into the Semitic tradition of literature. Sumerian gods either keep their Sumerian names in Akkadian works, such as Ninurta, or they are transferred directly into Akkadian; for example, the goddess Inanna becomes Ishtar, the moon-god Nanna becomes Sin, and the sun-god Utu becomes Shamash. It is therefore not often appropriate to try to distinguish Sumerian from Akkadian themes or texts, or to separate 'Semitic' characteristics from non-Semitic. Translation skills developed early through the use of bilingual and trilingual manuals found on sites both in Mesopotamia and far abroad, for instance at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt and Tell Aphek in Palestine, and several major myths are known to us from bilingual texts in which each line of Sumerian is translated or paraphrased with a line of Akkadian.

Sumerian and Akkadian compositions are preserved on clay tablets that are usually copies of older texts. For this reason we can seldom put an accurate date to a composition; in any case, texts evolved through time and seldom if ever reach a static, canonical form. Indications of date are therefore approximate in this chapter.

However, scenes from known myths are thought to be recognizable on cylinder seals of c.2300 BC, showing that some themes from the basic stories presumably go back to that time at least, and writing at Ebla in Syria around 2300 BC was based on Mesopotamian cuneiform, although it quickly developed its own character. These facts may support a presumption that Canaanite literature, with its unmistakably different forms and emphases, developed under some influence from the literature of Mesopotamia. Issues of influence are therefore complex. The difficulties are exacerbated by the damaged condition in which most tablets are found, with the result that our knowledge of complete texts is slowly and painfully acquired. All our knowledge of Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite and Canaanite literature comes primarily from clay tablets that are usually damaged and incomplete.

Canaanite texts

The terms 'Canaanite' and 'Phoenician' are both words that refer to murex-purple. This dye, extracted from sea-shells along the Levantine coast from the mid-second millennium onwards, together with the organization for its use, distribution and trade, allowed great cities along the east Mediterranean coast to grow extremely wealthy. As a result, court life and the patronage of arts and crafts, including technical skills in metal working and literature, flourished to a high level. Such centres were Tyre, Sidon, Acco, Beirut and Ugarit. The population was ethnically mixed: west-Semitic people from the Amorite tribal movements of the Middle Bronze Age, east-Semitic people who had emigrated from Mesopotamia, and Achaean and Anatolian people who blended with them as a result of various forces including the migrations associated with the break-up of the Hittite empire, and the so-called Dark Age, linked to the movements of the Sea Peoples. They all eventually adopted some form of west-Semitic alphabet, which spread to Greece, so that essentially the same writing system was used for both Semitic and Indo-European languages and their literatures.

Of Canaanite literature we have only a glimpse from the cuneiform alphabetic texts found at Ugarit and nearby sites. They date to the end of the Late Bronze Age. How much of its tradition came down from Amorites who dominated the area in the Middle Bronze Age remains unknown for lack of evidence. How much of its tradition then fed into Phoenician literate culture in the great cities of Tyre and Sidon is also undocumented, although the later account given by Philo of Byblos shows connections as well as significant differences. Nevertheless, the texts from Ugarit suffice to show that Canaanite myths have some very close connections with biblical imagery and forms of poetic expression.

Hittite texts

Hittite myths and legends were eclectic, drawing upon Mesopotamian, Hurrian and Canaanite materials. The names of non-Hittite gods and cities from those materials are easily recognized in Hittite myths, and archaeologists have uncovered Akkadian and Hurrian originals from which translations were made at the capital city Hattusa in central Anatolia. The Hurrians were a non-Semitic, non-Indo-European people

who lived in eastern Anatolia; we do not yet have texts from any of their major cities. As in Palestine and the Levant, traditions of literacy in Anatolia in the Middle and Late Bronze Age drew upon the conventions and compositions that emanated from scribal schools in Mesopotamia. Therefore it is very difficult to isolate strictly Hittite material from Mesopotamian and Canaanite when we are looking at biblical texts. Since Hittite rule never penetrated Palestine, direct Hittite influence may well be lacking, although the name Tidal in Genesis 14.1, 9 may come from Tudhaliya (IV? 1254–1220 BC). Hittite writings are, however, especially interesting because they draw attention to the importance of Mesopotamian and Canaanite myths beyond the borders of native cities. They also show some of the processes by which myths from one country were adopted and adapted by another.

Egyptian texts

Egypt had a border in common with Palestine, which it dominated or influenced at certain periods. Its contribution to culture there is readily observable in iconography, particularly in metalwork and seals, and we can be sure that Phoenician culture acted as intermediary in conveying Egyptian influence to Palestine. But Egyptian writing was never adopted by indigenous scribes in the way that Akkadian cuneiform was, and Egyptian myths and other kinds of literature did not penetrate the educational system as Akkadian myths did. Although the seals of many individuals are Egyptianizing in style, the Bronze Age seals of Levantine kings are remarkably Syro-Mesopotamian in design. The names of Egyptian cities and gods are not found in the books of the Old Testament except in the immediate context of historical events. This seems to indicate that high culture in Palestine was connected to that of Canaan and Mesopotamia, whereas in general popular culture was influenced from Egypt.

Even though, during the Amarna period of the Late Bronze Age, Egyptian governors were installed in the cities of Palestine, cuneiform Akkadian, often in local dialects, was the language of international communication. This means that scribes were trained using set pieces from Mesopotamian myths and legends. We know this because cuneiform dictionary lists, epics and scribal exercises were found in the palace at Tell el-Amarna. The Egyptians had wisdom dialogues, proverbs and creation myths quite similar in form and content to those popular in Mesopotamia, and it is not always possible to distinguish which has influenced biblical texts.

Northern Syria and south-eastern Turkey

Patriarchal stories in Genesis mention on the one hand cities such as Erech and Ur in southern Mesopotamia, which have yielded literary material to the archaeologist's spade, and on the other hand cities such as Harran, Nahor and Serug in northern Syria, modern south-east Turkey, where virtually no excavation has taken place. The present-day scholar needs to be aware that this imbalance of discovery may skew our sense of proportion, and may drastically be rectified in future. Surprises may well be in store both from Amorite culture in the Middle Bronze Age and from Hurrian culture in the Late Bronze Age. The literature of neo-Hittite Luwian in the early Iron Age remains unknown, but Luwian was written and spoken in Anatolia during

the Middle and Late Bronze Age; now that continuity through the so-called Dark Age has been discovered for dynasties in cities governed by Hittites (for instance at Carchemish), some continuity of myths and legends in Luwian can safely be deduced. Luwian inscriptions are found as far south as Hamath during the ninth century BC. Aramaic material of the Iron Age, now coming to light on stone from Syro-Palestine, and on papyri from Egypt, Qumran and elsewhere, is beginning to show that there was a rich literature in that language, some of it independent of both biblical and cuneiform traditions.

Non-textual evidence

Some themes from the early literature of western Asia and Egypt would have been familiar from pictures. Wall-paintings from Egypt, the Levant, Syria and Mesopotamia, sculptured stone panels in temples and palaces, especially in Assyria and the neo-Hittite cities of Syria and Cilicia; cylinder seals from Syria and Mesopotamia; metal bowls decorated in repoussé work, of which particularly fine examples were made in Phoenicia (see [Figures 4.1, 4.2](#)), illustrate how the world was visualized in terms that relate to mythology; likewise woven and embroidered textiles, which have only survived in Egyptian tombs but were certainly made and used all over western Asia.



Figure 4.1 Apsu, the ocean of fresh water, represented by a stone basin in the temple of Assur, c.700 BC. Copyright Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.



Figure 4.2 The Legend of Etana shown on a cylinder seal c.2300 BC.
Copyright Pergamum Museum, Berlin.

The prime elements of creation were represented in temples: the Apsu was a basin standing for watery chaos and the father of the first gods, and the holy mound or mountain Duku was there too. The tablet and seal of destinies may also have had a physical presence in the shrine of destinies. As trophies of the victorious gods, many of the composite creatures who had fought with the forces of chaos were displayed in various temples.

THE TEXTS

Sumerian myths and legends

The Sumerian language is not related to any other known language, so that the process of decipherment has been slow. To this difficulty should be added the problems of reading the script, with its many ambiguities, correctly, as well as the poor state of preservation of many tablets. Most of the works identified have been reconstructed from fragments that do not necessarily come from the same recension, and many words and phrases will not be understood until enough variants make the reading clear.

A Sumerian literary account of the Flood story is found in The Eridu Genesis (Kramer 1983; Jacobsen 1987: 145–50). Its details, though fragmentary, seem similar to those in the much better preserved Akkadian versions, although the gods are given their Sumerian names and the hero who corresponds to the biblical Noah is called Ziusudra. Since Berossus, a priest of the Seleucid period who recorded Babylonian traditions in Greek, used this Sumerian version of the name, we may suppose that the Sumerian version of the Flood story remained in circulation after the death of Alexander the Great. The poor state of preservation allows few useful comparisons to be made with the story of the Flood in Genesis, except that the text now known as the Sumerian king-list (Borger et al. 1982: 328–37) inserts a reference to the Flood between legendary kings with fabulous lifespans, and dynasties that lead into known historical periods, and the Flood marks a similar transition in the Bible. The king-list may first have been drawn up around 2100 BC, but was certainly completed a couple of centuries later. We can therefore be confident that

some kind of Flood story was well established in early Mesopotamian tradition, where it is attached to the Sumerian city Shuruppak in lower Mesopotamia. Sumerian literary texts are notoriously difficult to understand, and this is especially true of BMes 120011 (Kramer 1979: 30–6), which may possibly refer to humanity's defiance and disgraceful sexual behaviour as a preliminary to the Flood. If so, it provides an antecedent to the motive found in the biblical account of the Flood that is absent from the main cuneiform accounts of the Flood. This type of variety in important details shows that many different versions of a work could exist at the same time, even though they might be contradictory. There was no single, consistent tradition. This means, for instance, that the naming of Mount Ararat (Urartu, in E. Anatolia) in Genesis 8 does not allow the biblical account to be dated; no extant Sumerian or Akkadian version gives that name for the mountain. Ararat is named also by Berossus in the third century BC. Berossus certainly did not invent this detail, and appears to have used a Sumerian version of the Flood story that is unknown to us.

A legend recounting the birth of Sargon of Agade in Akkadian is probably a translation of the opening to a Sumerian legend about his life, the Legend of Sargon (Lewis 1980; Afanas'eva 1987). It tells how his mother was a high priestess who bore him in secret and put him on the river in a reed basket. He floated down and was rescued by a water-drawer, who raised him as his adopted son. He found favour with the goddess Ishtar, and became the king's cup-bearer, from which position he eventually became king and performed great deeds. This theme is found in the biblical story of Moses, and was also used for Cyrus the Great. The Legend of Sargon also contains the motif of the messenger who unwittingly bears a letter requiring the recipient to put him to death, known later in the biblical story of Uriah in 2 Samuel 11.

Various Sumerian myths recount the exploits of gods and goddesses. Particular themes include amorous encounters that resulted in offspring, such as the myths of Enki and Ninhursag, and Enlil and Ninlil, which explain the relationship between different deities and connections between their cults. There are cultic journeys that sometimes show a transfer of power from one city to another, such as Inanna and Enki (Farber, in Hallo 1997: 522–6). There are visits to the Underworld that provide an explanation for the changing seasons, such as Inanna's Descent (Sladek 1974), and short stories about Dumuzi and Inanna (Alster 1972; Jacobsen 1987: 3–56). There are heroic battles led by a single god, notably Ninurta, against superior, evil forces, such as the Return of Ninurta to Nippur, also called Angim (Cooper 1978), which explains the presence of trophies in his temple, and Lugal-e (van Dijk 1983; Jacobsen 1987: 233–72), which assigns powers to different minerals once they have been conquered in a cosmic battle. The latter category was often adapted to fit the requirements of other cities, and we find allusions to other gods such as Nergal and Marduk slipping into the heroic role originally played by Ninurta. These allusions are often found in Akkadian literature, emphasizing the very close relationship between Sumerian and Akkadian myths. As a bilingual myth, Lugal-e was present in several copies in the great libraries of late Assyrian kings, which shows that it was still important in the Iron Age. It belongs to an important 'scientific' tradition in Mesopotamia that assigned characters and functions to different stones and metals.

Some of the myths are introduced with a few lines giving an account of how the

world was created. Such introductions are also used for other types of literature such as Incantations (Romer, in Farber 1987: 163–211), and Debate dialogues (Clifford 1994: 25–7).

Frequently used as a theme in Sumerian myths was the journey of a god from one cult centre to another. Enki's Journey to Nippur (al-Fouadi 1969), Nanna-Suen's Journey to Nippur (Ferrara 1973) and Inanna's Descent to the Underworld (Sladek 1974), in which the Underworld is represented by the temple of Nergal in Cuthah, are three examples. Such visits are thought to reflect actual cultic journeys in which the cult statue travelled by water on a ceremonial boat, and such myths may serve as aetiologies for a regular event in the cultic calendar explaining the division or transfer of powers between cities and their patron deities. The myths represent the gods as members of an extended family, each individual having human weaknesses: getting drunk, tricking each other, seducing, and manoeuvring amorous liaisons.

Other Sumerian myths recount episodes in the lives of legendary kings of Uruk, notably Enmerkar, Lugal-banda and Gilgamesh. The Lugal-banda Epic (Wilcke 1969), features the goddess of beer, Nin-kasi, who plays the part of a wise guide and advisor, similar to the role played by Siduri in the Akkadian Epic of Gilgamesh. This character seems to be ancestral to Wisdom the woman of Proverbs 8. Some of the short Sumerian myths about Gilgamesh were worked into the Akkadian Epic of Gilgamesh, but others, such as Gilgamesh and Akka (Katz 1993 and in Hallo 1997: 550–51), were excluded. The latter is one of very few Mesopotamian myths to involve the wars of men. The myth known as Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld (Shaffer 1963) was taken over directly into an Akkadian translation to form tablet XII of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

It has become clear as more texts have come to light that stories and motivations were different in the various cities of Sumer. Accounts of creation, which so often introduce other kinds of text – myths, incantations and hymns – vary greatly. For instance, in Nippur it was the cosmic marriage of Heaven and Earth that started the long process of evolution, perhaps reflecting the position of a city in the centre of lower Mesopotamia where the sky and the horizon of earth seemed limitless; but in Eridu, which lay at the shore of the Arabian Gulf, creation was initiated when Earth was fertilized by Water. The myth Enki and the World Order (Benito 1969) ascribed the creation of crafts, technologies and human institutions such as kingship to the god Enki, who then was tricked into allowing them to enter cities of which other deities were patrons. In early periods each city drew up a list of gods in an order that reflected its local cosmogony, but later these lists were apparently blended into a standard form that reflected the eminence of Uruk, Nippur and Babylon. This makes it difficult to pin down precise influences from cuneiform texts upon the Bible, but parts of Genesis and Exodus suggest familiarity with material from Mesopotamia, and they name some of its most ancient cities: Ur, Erech, Babel (Babylon) and Irad (Eridu). We know from Hittite texts that Mesopotamian scholars resided in foreign capitals to teach cuneiform writing, and that they used Sumerian myths as well as Akkadian ones in the training process in the Middle and the Late Bronze Age. A Sumerian myth of creation, *KAR 4* (Clifford 1994: 49–51), describing the original separation of Heaven and Earth, the origin of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, and how humans were made to work for the gods, has come from

Assyria around 1100 BC, and shows how important Sumerian myths still were at that time.

Sumerian stories accounted for the creation of humankind in at least two ways: by sexual union, and by agricultural work. In the Hymn to E-Engura (Clifford 1994: 29–30), as in other Sumerian tales, people sprouted like plants from the earth, engendered apparently by Sky; according to KAR 4.54 the seed for them was sown by Sky. In *The Praise of the Pickaxe* (= *The Song of the Hoe*: Farber, in Hallo 1997: 511–13) Enlil, god of Nippur, used a pickaxe or hoe and a brick-mould to create a human from soil.

In Genesis 11 is found the idea that people once spoke a single language. Later, God deliberately introduced confusion into language as different tongues came into being. This distinctive concept is described in the Sumerian work known as *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* (Jacobsen, in Hallo 1997: 547–49), Enmerkar being a legendary king of Uruk two generations before Gilgamesh. Enki (Ea), god of Eridu, is responsible: 'In those days . . . the people . . . could address Enlil in a single tongue . . . (but later) Enki . . . the lord of wisdom, the country's clever one, the leader of the gods, altered the speech in their mouths, as many as were there, the tongues of men which had been one'.

One of the most notable genres in Sumerian, which may not have any equivalent in Akkadian, is the *City Lament*. Laments for Ur, Eridu, Uruk, Agade and Nippur (e.g. Cooper 1983; Michalowski 1989) are all known as independent compositions in which the fall of a great city is described in rhetorical detail, and the catastrophe, related to actual historical events, is directly attributed to the wrath of various gods, thus transferring a real event into the realm of legend and referring occasionally to the city as a person. Although no first-millennium versions of these texts are known, in contrast to many other Sumerian literary works, influence upon Lamentations has been proposed. A text of the Seleucid period, written in Akkadian, and normally entitled *A Lament for Dumuzi* (Foster 1993: 838–39), is in fact a lamentation for various cities damaged or destroyed in times long past, and shows that the genre persisted well into the period of the Exile.

In general, Sumerian literature is known at its earliest from copies made during the early second millennium BC. The originals from which they were taken are of unknown date, presumably during the late third millennium or even earlier. Many of the compositions remained in libraries where they were still being copied, studied and translated in the Seleucid period.

Akkadian (east-Semitic) myths and legends

With Akkadian literary texts we reach a better level of understanding because the language is related to better-known languages such as Hebrew, which makes grammar and vocabulary easier to understand, and because the texts are written in a less laconic form than is the case for Sumerian. Akkadian is a term comprising all the dialects of Babylonian and Assyrian, written in cuneiform. Our sign-lists and dictionaries are well advanced, and many of the main myths and legends are relatively complete. Mesopotamian tradition ascribed its earliest literature to the Seven Sages, divine beings who were sent down to earth to bring the arts and institutions

of civilization to humankind before the Flood, and to semi-divine sages of historical times, such as Lu-Nanna, the sage of Shulgi (king of Ur 2150–2103 BC by the long chronology) who was credited with writing the Legend of Etana (Dalley 1989: 189–202), the king who wanted an heir and flew to heaven on an eagle's back to find the plant of birth; and Asalluhi-mansum, sage of Hammurabi (king of Babylon 1848–1806 BC). The hero of another myth, Adapa (Dalley 1989: 182–88), describes how humankind lost the chance of immortality; Adapa himself was a legendary character, the first sage, and was also known as Uan. In Greek the name is given as Oannes, and by a cunning word-play Uan was related to the word used in Akkadian for a craftsman or sage, *ummiānu*. A Syro-Phoenician version of the same concept is described in The Phoenician History recorded by Philo of Byblos (Attridge and Oden 1981), showing how this basic and important tradition is found beyond Mesopotamia. It is therefore especially interesting that a reference to the seven sages, *ummānu* in later Akkadian, has been found embedded in Proverbs 9. The biblical figure of Enoch in Genesis 5, the wise man who occupied a place intermediate between God and men, and achieved a certain degree of immortality, may be linked to this tradition.

Some well-known myths have no perceptible echoes in Old Testament writing; such are the Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld (Dalley 1989: 154–62), Nergal and Ereshkigal (Dalley 1989: 163–81), Adapa, and the Legend of Etana, of which the last-named envisages a time when human society existed without cities or the institution of kingship. Other works, however, have been much discussed in connection with the Old Testament. The Babylonian Epic of Creation (Dalley 1989: 228–77), known from texts of the first millennium, played a vital part in national ritual, both in Assyria and in Babylonia, and was regularly recited at major festivals. The story begins at a time when heaven and earth had not been created, when the water of the sea (Tiamat) and subterranean sweet water (Apsu) mingled and gave birth to the great gods. The children became too noisy, and when Apsu planned to kill them, he himself was killed. Then Tiamat rose up to avenge his death, and she created an army of composite creatures (see [Figure 4.3](#)) who represented both chaos and evil. Their leader Qingu obtained control of the Tablet of Destinies, without which the great gods were powerless. The hero-god is Marduk who defeated the forces of evil embodied in the primeval Tiamat and her monstrous army, using a magical spell and an impressive array of weaponry. He regained the stolen Tablet of Destinies, captured and controlled the monstrous army, and then set about putting the world in order. He put the heavenly bodies in place, regulating their movements; he built Babylon and its temples as the centre of religion for the world, and he created humankind with the help of his father Ea's magic, using the blood of the defeated enemy Qingu. To celebrate his works, the other gods proclaimed his many names, some of which imply syncretism with other deities such as the storm-god, agricultural gods and healing deities. He also receives the epithet Bel, 'Lord', as supreme leader of the assembly of great gods.

A Seleucid tablet, which describes the ritual required for the New Year festival at Babylon in the month of Nisan (the first month of the year starting in spring), states that the Epic of Creation was recited or enacted on several occasions during the days of celebration. Another text, quite recently discovered, shows that a rather

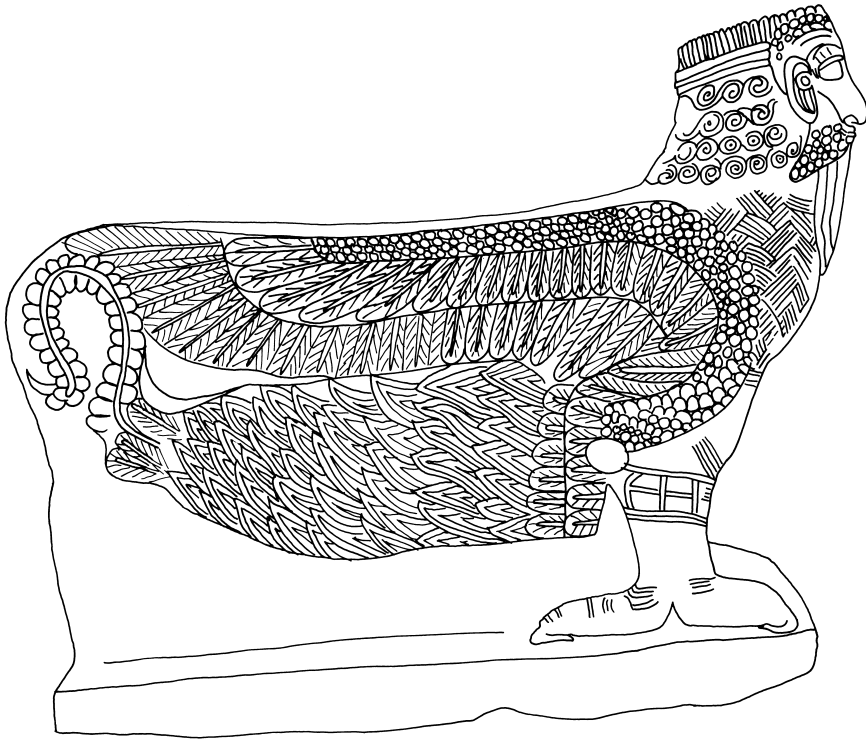


Figure 4.3 Scorpion-man from Tell Halaf in Syria, Early Iron Age.
Drawing by S. Dalley after A. Parrot, *Nineveh and Babylon* (1961), pl. 91.

different version of the epic, involving, for instance, the goddess Ishtar, was performed during the month of Kislimu (the ninth month of the year) in another, unidentified, city of Mesopotamia (Çagırgan and Lambert 1994). Fragments from the city of Ashur, probably dating to around 700 BC, show that there was an Assyrian version in which Ashur played the hero-god and took the title 'Bel'; and this version can be linked to a building inscription of Sennacherib, who decorated the doors of his new festival-house in Ashur with a scene from the great battle, stating that he, as king, took the part of Ashur, and was accompanied into battle by various other gods. This contrasts with the version we have from Babylon, in which Marduk faces the enemy Tiamat alone (Klein 1992).

The cherubim and seraphim, which are described in the visions of Ezekiel, may ultimately be derived from the subjugated composite creatures which fought beside Tiamat, and were on display as gigantic sculpture in Assyrian palaces and temples visited by envoys and deportees from Palestine (see [Figure 4.4](#)). One of the composite creatures, the *mušbuššu* (literally 'red dragon') was taken over by Marduk as his personal beast. The seven-headed red dragon of Revelation 12.3 may come from this tradition; for the cult of Marduk in Babylon survived into the Christian era (Dalley et al. 1997: 95); and at Tarsus Roman coins show that an Assyrian cult of the patron-



Figure 4.4 Winged, human-headed bull from Assyrian palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud. Copyright The British Museum.



Figure 4.5 Seven-headed dragon, shown on a cylinder seal, late third millennium BCE. Copyright D. Collon. Photo reproduced by kind permission of D. Collon.

god, identified with Marduk, still flourished in the early Roman empire (Dalley et al. 1997: 163). The seven-headed serpent is one of the trophies of Ninurta in *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur* (Cooper 1978: 154) (see [Figure 4.5](#)). In the Apocrypha Daniel's destruction of the dragon of Babylon in the story of *Bel and The Dragon* is a reworking of a similar theme in an explicitly Babylonian context.

Some of the themes in the Babylonian Epic of Creation have come from myths about the heroic deeds of Ninurta, in particular the Epic of Anzu (Dalley 1989: 203–27) in which Ninurta attacks Anzu and retrieves the stolen Tablet of Destinies, (see [Figure 4.6](#)), and some have been traced less specifically to national myths of the kingdom of Eshnunna, east of the Tigris. Several of the captured monsters are found as trophies of the god Ninurta in a Sumerian myth *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur* (Cooper 1978). These myths date back at the latest to the early second millennium, and the date of composition for the Epic of Creation may itself go back to that period. The same theme was used at an early period to the west of Mesopotamia: a letter from Mari alludes to a defeat of the Sea by the west-Semitic storm-god Addu in his cult centre Aleppo, ancient Halab, in the time of Hammurabi of Babylon (Durand 1993). Some scholars think that the essence of the composition is Amorite in origin; others still maintain that the composition arose from the ceremony conducted when a statue of Marduk, looted by raiding Elamites, returned to Babylon in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104 BC). The links between these different stories of hero-gods who defeat the forces of chaos and establish order in the universe make it difficult to identify with certainty particular characters or scenes depicted on cylinder seals, terracotta plaques and other media.

It is likely that there were many versions of this story of Creation and the ordering of the world in different cities. The moon-god of Harran, Ashur in Assyria, the storm-god of Aleppo, and other important deities in their various cult centres, were also known locally as Bel, ‘Lord’, and presumably acted the part of the hero-god, earning the title through victory. At Palmyra in the Roman period the chief god, perhaps a storm-god, was called Bel, and a sculptured frieze showed him shooting Tiamat from his chariot (see [Figure 4.7](#)). At Hatra the contemporary sun-god was called Bel

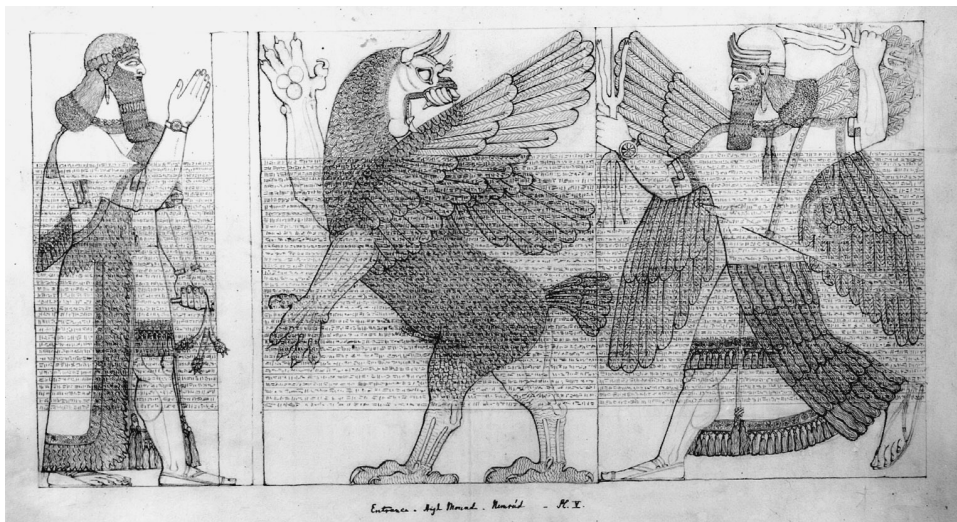


Figure 4.6 Ninurta attacking Anzu. Drawing from stone sculpture from Assyrian temple of Ninurta, Nimrud. Early Iron Age. British Museum Original Drawing 154. Copyright The British Museum.

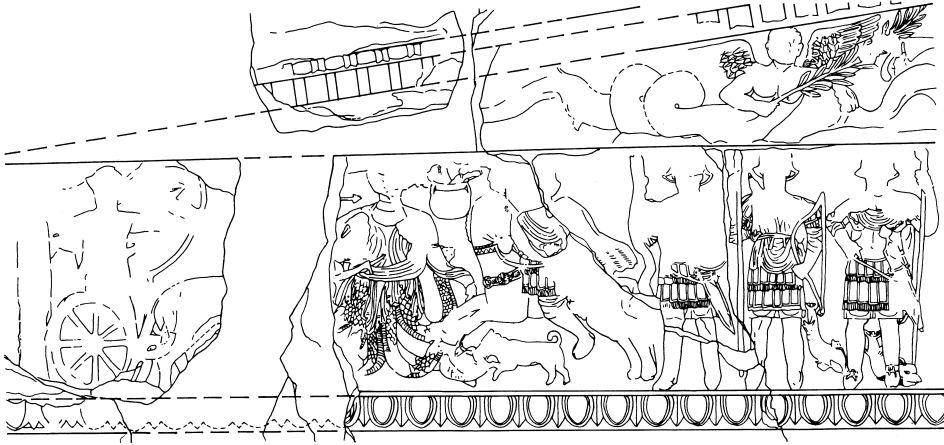


Figure 4.7 Frieze from the great temple at Palmyra showing Bel shooting Tiamat. Early Roman empire period. Drawing by Marion Cox, after H. Seyrig, 'Bas-reliefs monumentaux du temple de Bêl à Palmyre', *Syria* 15 (1934), pl. 20.

and his temple was named after that of Marduk in Babylon, Esagila; at the same period the temple of the New Year festival in Ashur was rebuilt. An Aramaic version of the story of Creation may have accompanied the ritual in those cities.

The Epic of Atrahasis (Dalley 1989: 1–38; Foster 1983: 158–201), written in the mid-second millennium BC, tells how the gods created humankind for labour and then periodically had to reduce overpopulation by causing natural disasters. The creator-god is Enki (Ea) who, with the wise goddess Nintu/Mami, mixed clay with the blood of a slain god and recited an incantation. The epithet 'wise', always given to Mami here, may be compared with the figure of Wisdom, as a woman who was present beside Yahweh at the creation, in Proverbs 8. The story of a universal Flood is an episode integral to the structure of the story.

The Babylonian Theodicy (Foster 1983: 806–14), a wisdom dialogue written in the late second millennium BC, contains a passage ascribing the creation of mankind to Narru (a name of Enlil), with Zulummar (a name of Ea) as the provider of clay, and Mami the goddess who give them shape. These gods were all responsible for introducing twisted words and falsehood into the speech of men. The bilingual Poem of Early Rulers (Alster 1990) begins creation with the god Enki/Ea and his designs or plans. The Theogony of Dunnu (Dalley 1989: 278–81; Hallo 1997: 404–15) treats creation as an agricultural process.

The Epic of Gilgamesh (Dalley 1989: 39–153), in its seventh-century version found at Nineveh, has a long textual history to which various earlier fragments bear witness. A tablet of the Bronze Age, perhaps around 1500 BC, has been found at Megiddo, which shows that an earlier version of that time was studied in Palestine. The later, so-called 'standard' work, still incompletely known, tells the story of Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, son of a king and a goddess, whose insufferable behaviour induces the gods to send down Enkidu, an innocent, unsophisticated man whose deep sense of outrage at injustice combines with friendship to reform Gilgamesh. They team



Figure 4.8 Humbaba, divine guardian of the Pine Forest in the Epic of Gilgamesh, from Tell el-Rimah, c.1800 BC. See T. Howard-Carter, *Iraq* 45 (1983), pl. Va. Photo reproduced by kind permission of David Oates.

up for an expedition to the Pine Forest to win fame by adventure, but commit sacrilege in killing Humbaba, the monstrous guardian, and in cutting down his trees. (see [Figure 4.8](#)). When Gilgamesh spurns the amorous advances of the goddess Ishtar, whose passion was aroused by his heroism and beauty, Enkidu insults her and so his death is decreed by the gods. Gilgamesh, inconsolable at the death and bodily corruption of his friend, wanders beyond the borders of the known world to cosmic regions where he meets the wise ale-wife Siduri and gets advice on how he can meet Ut-napishtim who achieved immortality because he survived the Flood. But the latter explains that such a Flood will never be allowed again, and so Gilgamesh cannot avoid death. On his return to Uruk, Gilgamesh is cheated, by a snake and his own carelessness, of a chance to obtain the plant of rejuvenation. He arrives home knowing that humanity's lot is restricted to happiness in human relationships and achievement in urban culture. An extra episode, in which Enkidu rises up from the Underworld to relate his experiences to Gilgamesh, is clearly a late addition.

In its seventh-century form, the Epic of Gilgamesh is divided into twelve tablets, although the matching prologue and epilogue enclose only the first eleven tablets. Fragments of text from various earlier dates allow us to see that this version is an elaboration of an earlier version known in Megiddo in the mid-second millennium, and that the older version was constructed by using themes from a selection of Sumerian stories about the hero Gilgamesh. As a possibly historical king of Uruk, Gilgamesh is listed in the Sumerian king-list.

Certain echoes of this epic have been found in the Bible. The city of Gilgamesh, Uruk, is named in Genesis as one of the great cities of early antiquity. Ecclesiastes 9.7–9 gives a paraphrase of Siduri's speech to Gilgamesh as it is known in the Bronze Age version of the text; and a proverb used by Enkidu to encapsulate his assertion that two people acting together are stronger than two separate individuals comes into Ecclesiastes 4.9–12. The motif of committing sacrilege by cutting down trees is found describing the acts of Sennacherib in 2 Kings 19.23. An early version of the Book of Enoch (Beyer 1994), written in Aramaic and found at Qumran, has contributed to showing that a reworking of the story of Gilgamesh, Humbaba and Ut-napishtim was embedded in the narrative, and that the character of Enoch seems to owe something to the person of Enkidu; later, Manichaean, versions of the same themes in the Book of Giants (Reeves 1992: 51–164; Reeves 1993) confirm this, and there are vestiges of themes from Gilgamesh also in the Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres (Pietersma 1994).

The story of the Flood in the Epic of Gilgamesh seems to have been taken over from the Epic of Atra-hasis, for the way in which the Flood story is inserted into the narrative suggests that it was not, originally, an integral part of the epic. The mountain on which the ark rests is named as Nimush only in the version in the Epic of Gilgamesh. A version of the Flood story in Akkadian cuneiform is known from fragments found at Ugarit.

Allusions to episodes in the Epic of Gilgamesh have been found in incantations of various periods, written in various languages. Akkadian Incantations (Foster 1983), like their Sumerian predecessors, often begin with a brief account of the creation of the world from prime elements, and sometimes allude to well-known myths. A few examples have been found beyond the borders of Mesopotamia, including Palestine.

Akkadian literature also produced battle epics based on the deeds of individual, historical kings. The best-known of these is the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta (Foster 1983: 209–29) who ruled Assyria in the thirteenth century, but the genre is known from the time of Hammurabi, from an Epic of Zimri-Lim, king of Mari (still unpublished). This genre may have originated among the west-Semitic Amorites rather than in the cuneiform tradition of Mesopotamia proper. Since these epics do not seem to have entered the canon of educational literature, and so were not copied by scribes through the generations that followed their composition, we mostly know of them from very fragmentary tablets of a single period. Features of their style are long and aggressive speeches made by the opposing heroes to justify their actions, and battle scenes reminiscent of the climax to the Epic of Creation, with the great gods playing a major role. The Song of Deborah in Judges 5 may be connected to this genre.

A genre that began in Sumerian but is known mainly in Akkadian is the Poem or Chant of self-praise (e.g. Foster 1983: 74 and 901), in which a deity, usually a

goddess, proclaims her own excellence. In other ways this type of composition is like a hymn in which the pious worshipper proclaims the virtues of the deity. Both types are found among the Hebrew Psalms.

In the Poem of Erra and Ishum (Dalley 1989: 282–315), probably composed in the eighth century BC, the merciless god Erra rants and rages, destroying men and animals, but is appeased by his helper Ishum. Some of the passages of rhetorical speech are similar in style to speeches of Yahweh in Ezekiel.

During the late Assyrian period at least one new myth seems to have been composed to account for the deportation of Marduk and Ishtar from Babylon after Sennacherib sacked the city. A rough draft for such a composition seems to have been made in the text now called *The Marduk Ordeal* (Livingstone 1989: 82–91), and there are some other fragments that may be related to the same episode in history and the need to justify it in mythological terms. In particular, an allusion linked to a non-standard version of the Epic of Creation names the great enemy as Anu, rather than Apsu, refers to the villain Qingu as the father of seven wicked sons, and features the goddess Ishtar as Marduk's fervent supporter. This group of texts contributed material to the story in the book of Esther, with its tale of Esther (Ishtar) and Mordecai (Marduk) as people deported from their homeland, resident at the court of an alien monarch (Dalley forthcoming).

Ugaritic-Canaanite (west-Semitic) myths and legends

For our knowledge of this material we are dependent upon two very different kinds of source: on the one hand, clay tablets of the fourteenth/thirteenth century found at Ugarit, written in the alphabetic cuneiform known as Ugaritic, and on the other hand a Hellenistic account of Phoenician traditions recorded by Philo of Byblos (Attridge and Oden 1981). The latter was based upon records said to have been made by a priest in Beirut, and so presumably some of the differences can be attributed to the individual traditions of Beirut and of Ugarit. Philo also acknowledges the Mesopotamian tradition of the Seven Sages. Some of the characteristics of Philo's work may be due to Hellenistic interpretation, but certain traits once thought to be Hellenistic, such as euhemerism (which maintains that the gods were originally men who built cities etc.), have since been recognized in indigenous Near Eastern traditions. Primordial elements such as air, water and mist, which are represented by god-names in all Near Eastern myths, are demythologized and given as common nouns by Philo, so that they can be related to the writings of early Greek philosophers. Some god-names are left in their Near Eastern form, but others are translated into their Greek equivalents. Some of the information Philo relays has been verified by the myths found at Ugarit, and so can definitely be attributed to the Late Bronze Age, pre-biblical, traditions of Canaan.

Ugaritic myths reflect a background of luxury and strife in the region between the sea and the mountains. Chief among them is the Myth of Ba'al (Pardee, in Hallo 1997: 241–73), probably a single composition of some 2,350 lines. Its story about Ba'al, a storm-god, and Yam, the Sea, portrays a stormy environment in which the great gods live on Mt Zephon, a dramatic peak to the north of Ugarit, beneath which lies the source of the rivers, the cosmic wellspring of fresh water where El,

father of the gods, resides. Ba'al rides the clouds and battles for supremacy with the help of the virgin goddess Anat. His enemies Yam, 'Sea', and Mot, 'Death', are both male, and his defeat of them justifies the building of his new palace in Ugarit, using all the skills of the craftsman god Kothar-wa-Hasis. The details of smelting, plating and decorating, and the selection of precious materials from all over the earth, echo building inscriptions rather than Mesopotamian myths, but Athirat's role as the one who moulds bricks has Mesopotamian overtones. The great banquet of deities who drink wine to excess from fine vessels also reminds one of a major theme in the Epic of Creation, but the Ugaritic work has added music and minstrels to the scene. El, father of the gods, lives at the source of the rivers, a concept similar to that expressed in Genesis 2 and Ezekiel 28 and 32. The overarching theme is comparable with Marduk's battle and building works as recited in the Epic of Creation, but many of the details are very different. Names for the enemy are also found in the Psalms: Lotan, Rahab, Yam and Tannin are all specific to the Ugaritic myths. Psalm 29 in particular is thought to have been written under Canaanite influence (Day 1990: 42). The stories of Ba'al abound with goddesses including Athirat (biblical Asherah), 'Anat, Pidray, Tallay and Arsay. It is possible that versions of these myths were recited in temples throughout Syria and Palestine in the same way as we know, from clear written evidence, that versions of the Babylonian Epic of Creation were recited in major cult centres in Mesopotamia, but proof is lacking.

The name Ba'al is an epithet meaning 'Lord' in west Semitic, which corresponds to the east-Semitic Bel, 'Lord'. It could be used for any god as head of the pantheon in his own city, but is most frequently found of the storm-god in the Levant, and of Marduk in Mesopotamia (Fleming 1993). Ba'al's father is usually called by his epithet El, 'god', and at Ugarit El may stand for the chthonic god Dagan. A similar practice in naming hero-gods by such epithets is found in the Akkadian Epic of Anzu, the early version of which calls the hero-god *ilu* (cognate with El), 'god' and the later version calls the hero-god *bēl* (cognate with Ba'al), 'lord'.

The manner in which the myths of Ba'al are told, with short lines, frequent divine epithets and alternative names for gods; parallelism in which a pair of lines repeats the sense using alternate vocabulary, and various other stylistic features, have found many echoes in the Psalms and in parts of Isaiah. The closest parallels in biblical material can be made among such poetic conventions, and in the name and nature of the sea-serpent Lotan (probably Leviathan), which represents the powers of chaos. The parallels are mainly found in the Psalms, especially Psalm 29, and in the Prophets.

Allusions to myths of creation and the defeat of the serpent are found in Ugaritic incantations. Particularly important in this respect is the Ugaritic Liturgy against Venomous Reptiles (Pardee, in Hallo 1997: 295–98)

The Legend of Aqhat (Pardee, in Hallo 1997: 343–55) is the story of Daniel, 'man of Rapiu', a just king who was unable to produce a son and heir until Ba'al interceded and Aqhat was born. The event was celebrated with a feast. The divine craftsman Kothar-wa-Hasis made a bow for Aqhat which was so fine that the goddess 'Anat coveted it. Unable to get it by fair means, she resorted to force, turning her servant into an eagle which killed and ate Aqhat. Daniel eventually recovered the bones and buried his son. He cursed three towns in whose vicinity the murder

occurred, but proved unable to exact vengeance on the gods. The story shares with the myth of Etana the theme of a king's childlessness until a god intercedes, but there are no other specific resemblances. The character of the wise king Daniel may perhaps be connected with the later sage of Jewish legend called Daniel, to whom the passages Ezekiel 14.14, 20 and 28.3 refer, but no connections have been found with the biblical book of Daniel.

The Legend of Kirta (or Keret) (Pardee, in Hallo 1997: 333–42) also deals with the theme of childlessness. Keret was a just king who had lost seven wives. The great god El appeared to him in a dream and told him to extract by force a new wife of royal blood. The myth deals with the nature of kingship and its effect upon the fertility of the land and upon human behaviour. A kernel of historical fact is thought likely for the setting, but has not been identified.

The Myth of Nikkal and the Kotharat (Gibson 1977: 128–29) tells how the marriage was arranged between Nikkal (a pronunciation of Ningal, the Sumerian moon-goddess) and Yarikh the west-Semitic god of the new moon, and how the birth of a son is foretold. Gifts are given, and hymns of praise sung. The story names a human bride and commends her to El and to the Kotharat, who are divine midwives and wise attendants, indicating that the myth accompanied a ceremony for a mortal rite of passage.

Other fragments of myths from Ugarit suggest that we possess only a small proportion of the whole quantity of such material as would have been available in Ugarit and other Levantine cities in the Late Bronze Age. No Canaanite myth telling the whole story of creation or the creation of humankind has been found among the tablets at Ugarit, but indirect evidence from a Hittite myth, Elkunirsha and Ashertu (Beckman, in Hallo 1997: 149), shows that the Canaanites were not lacking in this respect, for Elkunirsha is a phonetic rendering of the Canaanite name and epithet *El qōnē ereš*, 'El creator of the earth', and it is found much later in Aramaic at Palmyra and Hatra in the first century AD (Clifford 1994: 126 n. 25). It shows that a Canaanite myth about the creation of the world, handed down into Aramaic, still remains undiscovered. The birth of the great gods is told in the Ugaritic Myth of Dawn and Dusk (Pardee, in Hallo 1997: 274–83), giving insight into one episode in the story of creation.

Hittite myths

Most of the myths that have come to light in the Hittite capital Hattusa are written in the Hittite language in cuneiform script. The scribes who worked there bore Mesopotamian names, but their particular use of the writing system indicates that they were trained in the writing traditions of Bronze Age cities in North Syria. This may partly explain why the Hittites had such a mixture of material in their corpus of myths. The tablets from Hattusa were found in a very fragmentary state. Nevertheless, it has proved possible to assign the Hittite material to several distinct categories.

Several myths concern the storm-god, his deeds, his irrational anger, and the means required to pacify him. As in the Ugaritic myths, there is a strong connection with seasonal activities and festivals, although in the Hittite myths the story is explicitly connected to a festival. The Wrath of Telepinu (Beckman, in Hallo

1997: 151–53) tells how Telepinu, a storm-god, disappeared in a rage, causing fertility on earth to cease. An eagle and a bee were despatched to find him and bring him back, and he was pacified with great difficulty and much magic. The Storm-god and the serpent Illuyanka (Beckman, in Hallo 1997: 150–51) concerns a sequence of encounters between the storm-god of Nerik, a city in the Hittite heartland, and a serpent who seems to represent the forces of chaos. The story is told as an accompaniment to the *purulli*-festival.

Some Mesopotamian myths were known in Hittite translations with modifications. The Epic of Gilgamesh was translated into both Hittite and Hurrian, but the fragments we have are too small for us to assess how much divergence separated them from the Akkadian versions that we have. One remarkable detail seems to diverge from the Mesopotamian versions that are extant: Gilgamesh and Enkidu are explicitly referred to in Hittite as giants, which links them to the early version of the book of Enoch, found at Qumran. But we cannot tell how direct or indirect Hittite influence was upon the Aramaic composition.

Some Mesopotamian and Hurrian deities feature in Hittite myths. The Myth of Appu and his two sons (Hoffner, in Hallo 1997: 153–55) involves the sun-god of Sippar, Marduk of Babylon, and Shawushka, goddess of Nineveh, as well as the Hurrian storm-god Teshub of Kummiya, a major cult centre on the upper Tigris. The Song of Kumarbi (Hoffner 1990: 40–2) involves the Hurrian storm-god Teshub as well as Mesopotamian deities, and describes how generation succeeded generation of gods by violence; comparisons have been made with the Theogony of Hesiod. It may belong to a cycle of songs that includes the Song of Silver and the Song of Ullikummi (Hoffner 1990: 45–60).

Canaanite myths were known in Hittite. The myth Elkunirsha and Ashertu (Beckman, in Hallo 1997: 149), preserved only in small fragments, concerns rivalries among the great deities of the Syrian pantheon: the gods El and Ba'al, and the goddesses Ashertu and Astarte.

Egyptian myths and legends

Different texts from various cities in Egypt give accounts of cosmogony that emphasize the role played by the patron god of a particular city. As in other parts of the ancient Near East, each account had its place and was not perceived as conflicting with or contradicting other accounts. Some syncretism connected the different traditions, and different groupings of gods drew together important aspects of creation. All the traditions begin by trying to express a time before creation, and they indicate a primeval, watery formlessness; but then they envisage a single entity from which the diversity of creation emerges, whether by speech, by separation, by spitting, or by masturbation. The sun-god always plays a vital role. The Pyramid Texts and the Coffin Texts of the third millennium, and the Book of the Dead of the second millennium, as well as prayers and rituals (Lichtheim 1975; Clifford 1994), are the main sources of information for the following myths.

At Heliopolis the god Atum, symbolized by the *bwn*-stone (an obelisk representing the primordial mound that caught the rays of the rising sun), generated nine gods, the Ennead, by masturbation or, alternatively, spit.



Figure 4.9 Ivory carving from Samaria showing Horus on a lotus flower, early Iron Age.
Drawing by S. Dalley after J. W. Crowfoot, *Samaria – Sebaste 2 Early Ivories* (1938).

At Memphis, Ptah, the god of craft skills, gave material form to a mental image or word, and so created Atum and the Ennead. This is closest to the biblical creation in which the Creator-God stands outside the universe at the beginning, and so it is thought that the theology of Memphis may have influenced Genesis 1 and Psalm 104.

At Hermopolis the sun-god Re was born from an egg that lay in a watery chaos, and Re was the prime mover, creating four pairs of primeval gods resembling frogs and snakes. In an alternative tradition from the same city, a lotus bud opened to reveal Horus, who was then the prime mover (see [Figure 4.9](#)).

Cosmological concepts are found in hymns, including in The Great Hymn to the Aten (Lichtheim, in Hallo 1997: 44–6), written in the Amarna period. It has been compared closely with Psalm 104.

An important legend in Egyptian traditions was the Legend of Osiris (Cooke 1979) to which Egyptian texts refer in passing; a coherent account is given in Greek by Plutarch. Osiris, a wise man who introduced wine into Egypt, was put in a chest in the Nile and drowned by his brother Seth. The chest was washed up in Byblos; Isis, their sister, collected bits of his body, and she with Nephthys reconstituted it and brought it back to life. Osiris became a fertility god, acted as ruler of the Underworld and judge of the Dead, and was equated with the Pharaoh as one who was resurrected. His links with the city of Abydos were especially strong. Connections with the story of Moses are not now favoured.

No story of a universal Flood is found in any Egyptian myth or tradition. A Canaanite-influenced myth that features the goddess Astarte and the threatening sea, Yam, is The Legend of Astarte (Ritner, in Hallo 1997: 35–6). Incorporated into a spell is an account, The Repulsing of the Dragon (Ritner, in Hallo 1997: 32), of

how the sun-god Re had to overcome a gigantic serpent each day. In this tale the serpent presumably represents darkness and chaos.

Aramaic myths and legends

From Egypt comes an Aramaic text written in Egyptian demotic script (Steiner, in Hallo 1997: 309–26), which was addressed to an audience consisting partly of Israelites living in Egypt. It recounts the liturgy for a New Year festival in Upper Egypt in which the main deities have been identified as Nanay (a Babylonian goddess of Uruk) and Nebo (the Babylonian/Assyrian god Nabu). The text ends with a legend about the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal and how his brother Sarmuge (Shamash-shum-ukin) was king in Babylon but rebelled against his brother, despite the intercession of their sister Saritrah. The story explains why Ashurbanipal had to capture Babylon. The text seems to have been revised for use in a new situation, perhaps when Cyrus defeated Nabonidus and needed to justify his capture of Babylon.

The Legend of Ahiqar (VanderKam 1992) is a court narrative, which is now thought to go back to an Aramaic original. The story is set in the court of the Assyrian kings Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, and attached to it is a series of proverbs, ostensibly composed by the wise Ahiqar. The collection in general, and a few in detail, have been compared with the biblical book of Proverbs, especially 23.13–14. Ahiqar is mentioned in the Book of Tobit, an Aramaic story in the Apocrypha, as an Israelite relative of Tobit at an earlier Assyrian court. Sections of text in Ahiqar are reused in the story of Aesop, with its attached proverbs and fables, known in Greek, which is set in the court of a legendary king of Babylon.

Court legends of the type known from the book of Esther have been identified in Aramaic fragments from Qumran (White Crawford 1996).

Many of these texts appear to begin with a historical situation arising from court life in the Late Assyrian period. Some of them are then adapted to later courts: to the neo-Babylonian court of Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus, or to the Persian courts of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes. The Prayer of Nabonidus (Levine and Robertson, in Hallo 1997: 285–6), an Aramaic text found at Qumran, seems to be antecedent to the story of Nebuchadnezzar's madness in the book of Daniel; the court is still in Babylon, but the name of the king changed.

Aramaic literature, with its reworking of themes for new political backgrounds, has as important a role as the older literatures of western Asia for illustrating the background to the biblical world.

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CHAPTER FIVE

HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT



A. D. H. Mayes

GENERAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

That history must be written afresh in each generation (Collingwood 1946: 248) is a basic recognition that provides a framework for understanding both ancient and modern historiography. It presupposes not simply that the production of history is a cumulative process, under continuous revision as new evidence emerges and new methods are applied, but rather also that the past is never objectively there for examination, but is what is mediated through the work of historians. Writing about the past, historiography, is the historian's narrative construction, the result of a process of selection and organization necessarily related to the cultural conditions within which it is formulated and the purposes it is designed to serve. There is a broad field here within which more or less credence can be given to the historian's account as a reliable representation of the past. Frequently, however, the issue is expressed in terms of a principled denial of the possibility of there being anything other than the historian's narrative reconstruction: the past has no independent reality, not in the sense that events did not happen, but in the sense that the narrative rendering of the past, with its connections and explanations, is wholly the imaginative construction of the historian, a creative fiction to be examined and judged by literary criteria rather than by criteria of historical credibility. 'Formerly, when historians invoked the idea of imagination, they meant the exercise of imagination required to transcend the present and immerse oneself in the past. Today, it more often means the opposite: the imagination to create a past in the image of the present and in accord with the judgment of the historian' (Himmelfarb 1992: 14).

The current theoretical discussion in the field of general historiography relates directly to historiography in the Old Testament. It is not simply a question of how Old Testament historiography may be used in the reconstruction of Israelite history, a matter that will be considered briefly at a later stage of this study, but rather in the first instance a question of how that literature is to be understood. In so far as historians in general work within specific cultural conditions, which are the matrix of their narrative constructions, does not the same hold good for those who produced Old Testament historiography? The issue here is to do with understanding the nature of the genre Old Testament historiography, an issue that cannot be divorced from the question of the nature of historiography in general.

An account of the history of thought about the nature of history cannot be the subject of this study (see, e.g., Collingwood 1946; Breisach 1983; Momigliano 1977, 1990), but aspects of current approaches to historiography should be noted, particularly in so far as they find clear resonances within current approaches to Old Testament historiography. At the postmodernist end of the spectrum, the argument that historiography results in texts that are to be approached as literature, without any necessary reference to anything outside itself, carries to its logical extreme the view that narrative history is the historian's construction, in principle no different from a work of fiction as far as the hermeneutical activity of the reader is concerned. Its truth is the reality the 'historian' has constructed, and the same linguistic, stylistic and deconstructionist approaches are appropriate to its expression as are appropriate to any literary work. This may be best exemplified in the work of Hayden White (1973, 1978; though see Barstad 1997: 43), and, for ancient history, Averil Cameron (1989). In neither case is it denied that there is such a thing as a historical event or that a distinction can be drawn between fact and fiction, but in both instances it is clear that, as far as the meaningful relationship of events is concerned, primacy belongs to the text and the text-reader relationship rather than to the objective reality of any referential truth behind the text. This development has arisen in response to White's question 'why do historians persist in failing to consider historical narratives as what they most manifestly are – verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in science?' (quoted by Munslow 1997).

On the opposite side, Fustel de Coulanges is frequently held to exemplify the view that the task of the historian is to present the facts, which then speak for themselves: 'it is not I who speak, but history that speaks through me' (see, e.g., Becker 1959: 129f.; Fischer 1971: 4ff.). The objective description of the past as it really was, the simple collection of the facts of the past as discrete, knowable entities, is the historian's function, which may be realized through strict adherence to the historical method. Built on the principles of methodological doubt and analogy, the method involves the critical examination of evidence and the presupposition that events in the past were analogous, in terms of their general nature and their causal relationships, to events in the experience of the historian. Historiography is thus released from the subjective interests of the historian, in that it is concerned with critical enquiry in order to determine the truth about events that actually did occur (Mandelbaum 1977: 7ff.).

A middle path between these two extremes is usually sought: a sequence of events becomes history only when organized by the interpretative human intelligence (Elton 1969: 57). The argument, therefore, can concern only the nature, rather than the fact, of that subjective dimension. The selection of those events in the past that are to be organized and interpreted in historical reconstruction is necessarily a function not simply of the individual historian and his or her purposes and critical insight, but also of the social and cultural context to which the historian belongs. Moreover, the processes involved in the interpretation of data go back to and are dependent upon generalizations concerning human behaviour that are rooted in the contemporary culture (E. H. Carr 1961: 56ff.; Finley 1986: 68f.). Such

generalizations are different in principle from the laws of natural science, since they derive from intuitive understanding based on experience rather than from experiments involving empirical observation (see Berlin 1980: 124ff.), and to that extent the idiographic objectives of the historian may still be usefully contrasted with the nomothetic aims of the natural scientist (Mandelbaum 1977: 4ff.). Yet the historian, whether ancient or modern, is writing about the past of the present: whether or not consciously present as a datum for explanation or legitimation, the present of the historian is the reality within the context of which the past is brought to light and interpreted. J. Huizinga's famous definition of history (1963: 9) as 'the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past' may not be wholly adequate to all forms of historiography, but it is peculiarly appropriate as expressing a line of essential continuity between Old Testament and modern historiography.

HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Historiography

The writing of history is a literary activity that presupposes a historical consciousness. It was until fairly recently widely believed that the rise of a historical consciousness was unique to Israel in the ancient Near East, and that only with the later emergence of Greek historiography did any genuine parallel emerge (Mowinckel 1963: 4ff.). Other nations in the ancient Near East scarcely progressed beyond the keeping of lists and annals, the raw material of history, and their worldview was heavily dependent on an understanding of the actions of the gods in nature rather than in events. In Israel, on the other hand, a real form of historical writing emerged, using sources, and based on a dynamic, linear conception of history as purposive (Porter 1979: 125f.). The sources for historical writing as a literary genre were often the saga and the legend, the differences between them being that while saga and legend were oral and dealt with single topics, historiography was literary and dealt with a sequence of events (Noth 1958: 1498; see the discussion in Van Seters 1983: 209ff.), but the particular impulse that gave rise to that literary form, the emergence of a historical consciousness, was Israel's understanding of Yahweh as the sovereign Lord of history who had entered into a covenant relationship with Israel (Gese 1965). Von Rad's influential study (1966: 166ff.) identified the court history of David (2 Sam. 9–20; 1 Kgs 1–2), deriving from the time of Solomon, as the oldest example of ancient Israelite historical writing. Over against the older hero sagas, such as the Gideon account in Judges 6–8, there are no miraculous divine interventions in this historical writing, but within the chain of cause and effect on the human level the divine hand is at work: it is Yahweh who has brought all to pass, working secretly in the realm of the profane. The predisposing factors that made historical writing of this nature possible in Israel were three: first, Israel's general historical sense, clearly present even in the most primitive manifestations of its consciousness, the tribal aetiological sagas; secondly, Israel's talent for narrative presentation in a simple, limpid style; and, thirdly, Israel's unique conception of the activity of Yahweh in history.

Major weaknesses in this view emerged especially as a result of the work of Albrectson (1967), which demonstrated that in the texts of other ancient Near Eastern nations the gods are depicted as active in the domain of history, historical events being, from very early time, interpreted as divine actions. In neither case is the human chain of cause and effect broken; in both cases the secret divine activity is the effective power at work in human affairs.

Moreover, it had long been recognized (see already Gese 1965: 59f.) that the Hittites in the ancient Near East had 'developed the gift of historical observation to the highest degree'. Particularly in the historical prologue of the Hittite treaty texts, extensive and detailed reviews of past events are provided. The historicity of events, it is argued (Thompson 1992: 206), is here a central concern. In this there is a similarity with Greek historiography, which is characterized by a critical evaluative approach in the interests of ascertaining the truth of events recorded. This has led now to the position that a very different form of contrast may be drawn between Israel on the one hand and ancient Near Eastern and later Greek historiography on the other, in which the suitability of the term historiography for Israelite records may be denied. Historiography, it is argued (Thompson 1992: 207f.; 1996: 26ff.), should be understood as a narrative genre in which reference is made to events of the past understood as true, real and probable in terms of evidence. The distinction between historiography and fiction 'lies within the intentionality of the authors and in their assumptions regarding the reality of the past of which they write'. Historiography thus understood as a critical discipline is rarely to be found in the Old Testament. The biblical tradition, it is argued (Thompson 1992: 209), is marked rather by antiquarianism, a concern to preserve, classify and arrange a cultural heritage. There is only an impression of chronological progression; what is really characteristic is a structuring into a succession of great periods, which is interested more in classifying and cataloguing than it is in historiography.

The attempt to distinguish between historiography and what is not historiography on the basis of an authorial intention to evaluate the historical reliability of the records of past events presupposes a too narrow understanding of the nature of historiography. It may be that critical evaluation of the traditions of the past with respect to their historicity is difficult to find in the Old Testament, but, in Greek historiography, it is not necessarily that, or that alone, which defines it as historiography. Herodotus selected events as worthy of being rescued from oblivion, and he did so on the basis of both the best information available and the intrinsic significance of those events (Momigliano 1977: 190f.). In Greek historiography as in Israelite and other ancient Near Eastern historiography there is the selection and ordering of past events from the perspective of the present. In that Israelite historians did not critically evaluate their sources their historiography may be pre-modern, but its classification as historiography is scarcely to be denied. There are differences between Greek and biblical historiography also in other respects: biblical historiography reaches back to creation; it does not distinguish between a mythical and a historical age (Momigliano 1977: 194ff.), but the fundamental nature of the activity as an interpretative approach to the past from the standpoint of contemporary culture is common. The motivation that leads to its production is, in the most general sense

at least, an explanatory purpose: how the past changed into the present, that present offering the conditions from the perspective of which the events of the past are selected and interpreted.

Biblical historiography

Biblical historiography is a term applied mainly to two major sections of the Old Testament, the Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicler's History. The Pentateuch, however, cannot be left out of consideration here, for even though its content may for the most part be dealt with under headings different from this, in its final form it reflects concerns that may properly be viewed as historiographical. In fact, Huizinga's definition of historiography given above may be used in quite a precise way as an interpretative key to the concerns of all three blocks of historiographic material in the Old Testament: the Deuteronomistic History, the Pentateuch and the Chronicler's History. For chronological and other reasons it is appropriate to treat them in that order.

The Deuteronomistic History

The Deuteronomistic History, comprising Deuteronomy to 2 Kings (excluding the book of Ruth, which, in the Hebrew Bible, appears in the final group of Old Testament books known as the 'Writings'), was first fully recognized and described by Martin Noth (1943), who argued for its having originated as a distinct unit on the basis of its consistency of language, structure and ideas. The language, later thoroughly described by Weinfeld (1972: 320ff.) and Hoffmann (1980: 325ff.), was held to be easily recognizable because of its plainness and the repeated use of stock phrases. In structure it is marked by the regular appearance of speeches or narratives composed by the Deuteronomist at critical points to review the history and draw consequences from it (Josh. 1; 12; 23; Judg. 2:11–23; 1 Sam. 12; 1 Kgs 8:14–61; 2 Kgs 17:7–41), the whole being also held together by a consistent chronology maintained throughout the period covered by the history. As far as its ideas and purpose are concerned, Noth noted its lack of interest in the cult, its emphasis on obedience to covenant law as the basis of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, and its evident purpose to account for the disastrous end to the history of the people as the realization of the curse for disobedience attached to the covenant law.

Noth's work found wide but not universal agreement. Major difficulties emerged in relation to internal consistency in the work, difficulties that could not be resolved by reference to the source material taken up by a single Deuteronomistic author or editor (see Mayes 1983; O'Brien 1989). Neither traditio-historical (Hoffmann 1980) nor literary (Polzin 1980; Van Seters 1983) arguments have proved adequate to maintain the unity of the work: its internal breaks and points of unevenness remain significant indicators of the work's origin and history of construction, even though that origin and history have not yet been convincingly described. Two major approaches, both of which are rooted in dissatisfaction with Noth's understanding of the negative purpose of the history, have developed, one originating with Wolff (1961) and the other with von Rad (1962).

Wolff's argument, which drew attention to the significance of the theme of 'return' in the Deuteronomistic History, assigned responsibility for the work to a Deuteronomistic circle or school, rather than to an individual author; this then provided the possibility of distinguishing between layers of Deuteronomistic editorial work, within which context the work as a whole could be understood as having both negative and positive purposes. Significant contributions to this development have come from Smend, Dietrich and Veijola.

Smend (1971) has argued that Deuteronomistic texts in Joshua (1; 13; 23) and Judges (2) are not unified compositions, but incorporate later supplements to a basic Deuteronomistic text. These supplements, forming a single, secondary layer, are concerned with obedience to the law, and make Israel's success in its conquest of the land conditional on such obedience. Thus, a distinction is drawn between the Deuteronomistic historian, for whom Israel's conquest of the land was complete and successful, and a later ('nomistic') Deuteronomistic editor (DtrN), for whom that conquest has been successful only 'to this day' (Josh. 23:9b).

Dietrich's detailed study of Kings (1972) attempted to distinguish a prophetic stage of redaction of the Deuteronomistic history, preceding the work of DtrN. Noting the regular formal pattern of prophecy and fulfilment, he argued that such prophetic passages are all additions to their contexts, that their form is found with the classical prophets, especially Jeremiah, and that there is influence on their language from both the prophets and the Deuteronomistic History. The general intention of the redactor responsible for them (DtrP) is to unite prophecy with the Deuteronomistic movement, showing history as the arena in which the prophetic word works itself out. The work of the Deuteronomistic historian (DtrH), which reaches its conclusion in 2 Kings 25:21, was carried out shortly after the fall of Jerusalem, DtrN added the conclusion in 2 Kings 25:22–30, shortly after the release of King Jehoiachin; DtrP precedes DtrN, and should be dated to the early part of the exilic period.

Veijola (1975) traced all three layers back into the books of Samuel: DtrH is favourably disposed towards the monarchy and has a positive view of David as the servant of Yahweh; DtrP has subordinated the king to the prophet and presented the king as a source of guilt; DtrN holds up David as an ideal, but only on the basis of his obedience to the commandments, the monarchy in general being seen as an evil institution (Veijola 1977).

Smend later (1978) brought these studies together into a modified synthesis, which, though unable to assign every verse to its appropriate layer, attempted a full account of the development of the Deuteronomistic History: DtrH offered a continuous account, based on different sources, beginning in Deuteronomy 1:1 and ending with 2 Kings 25:30; DtrP introduced prophetic stories into the presentation of the monarchic period, the history of which ran its course according to the scheme prophecy–fulfilment; DtrN introduced an emphasis on the law throughout the work. All three belong closely together, the additions of the later redactors making use of the language of the work being edited. The task of distinguishing them is, therefore, difficult. In time, also, they are not far separated: DtrH, whose account ends with the release of Jehoiachin, cannot be dated before 560 BCE, and the two stages of redaction were completed by the early post-exilic period.

The approach initiated by von Rad involved understanding more radical change in the course of development of the Deuteronomistic History. Von Rad acknowledged that the Deuteronomist wished to explain why the saving history had ended in catastrophe, but argued that for the Deuteronomist the judgment of the law was not the only power active in history; equally effectual was the promise of salvation in the Nathan prophecy (see also McCarthy 1965). The work contains a messianic motif: the description of David, and the measuring of his successors by means of his standard, show that the Deuteronomist 'had a picture of the perfect anointed unremittingly present to his mind' (von Rad 1962: 345).

This tension between judgment and promise has been exploited by Cross (1973), who has argued that there are two themes in the Deuteronomistic History. The first is the sin of Jeroboam and his successors, which reaches its climax in the account of the fall of the northern kingdom and the meditation on that event in 2 Kings 17: 1–23. The second is the promise of grace to David and his house, which reaches its climax in the account of Josiah's reform in 2 Kings 22–3, where Josiah is said to have extirpated the cult of Jeroboam and attempted to restore the kingdom of David. By contrasting these two themes the Deuteronomist created a work that functioned to propagate Josiah's reform: Josiah is the new David, and in him is to be found true faithfulness to Yahweh, as a result of which the restoration of the Davidic kingdom is taking place. The Deuteronomistic History ended with the account of Josiah's reform, and so was a pre-exilic composition. Its extension, to bring the work up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile, is the work of a second Deuteronomistic editor, who has turned the history as a whole into an explanation of that catastrophe. This later editor's work can be found in Deuteronomy, Joshua, Samuel and Kings.

Cross's thematic argument was given literary-critical support by Nelson (1981) in his study of the regnal formulae that frame the references to each king in Israel and Judah. The formulae normally display considerable variety, but in the case of the last four kings of Judah they are terse and fixed. Here, they are the work of a later hand extending the work at a secondary stage. Nelson also marked out those parts of Kings that are with all probability to be assigned to the later editor: 1 Kings 8:44–51; 9:6–9; 2 Kings 17:7–20, 34b–40; 21:3bβ–15, all of which prepare for the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile.

Although there are points of contact between this approach and that of Smend, particularly in the anti-monarchic characterization of the later editor and in the passages assigned to him, Cross's approach is distinct in its conception of the significance of the change introduced by editorial work on the original Deuteronomistic History. While for Smend the editors introduced new emphases into a work whose basic nature remained relatively stable, for Cross the original Deuteronomistic History was fundamentally transformed by the later editor: the original work was designed as a paean of praise in support of the reforms of Josiah; the edited version is intended to explain the failure of the Davidic dynasty and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Although the practical possibility of distinguishing redactional layers in the Deuteronomistic History is sometimes rejected (see, e.g., Albertz 1994: 387f.), some useful contributions to the uncovering of that history have come from a variety of

directions: for example, major studies of Kings by Weippert (1972) and Provan (1988), of Judges by Richter (1964), of Deuteronomy–Joshua by Lohfink (1981), of Deuteronomy by Seitz (1971) and of the Deuteronomic law by Lohfink (1993) and Braulik (1993, 1995), suggest redactional developments relating to separate parts of the history before it was brought together in a comprehensive form. However uncertain some of these may be, it is still widely accepted that early stages of the emergence of the whole are connected with the royal reform carried out by Josiah in 621 BC in Judah.

This early edition of the Deuteronomistic History, with its focus on divine promises relating to the temple and the Davidic king, had a legitimating function; it was, however, overtaken by the events of 587 BC. The supreme role that had been claimed by the centre, the king and temple, had not justified itself in history, and there emerged an urgent need for a change of perspective that would provide a fresh interpretation of events as they developed in the latter part of the exilic period. The revision of the Deuteronomistic History involved more than an updating; it was an extensive reorientation of the work towards a transformed social, political and religious situation. It involved an extensive supplementation of the Deuteronomic lawbook, particularly through the addition of ethical demands in Deuteronomy 19–25 (see Braulik 1993: 321f., 333f.), and also extensive editing as well as supplementation of what had probably not yet been a complete account of Israel's history in the land.

The transformation of the original pre-exilic Deuteronomistic History was accomplished by a comprehensive redaction that is to be traced from its beginnings in Deuteronomy 4 to its conclusion in 2 Kings 25:27–30. It constitutes a creative retrieval of tradition to meet the needs of an emerging people without statehood, in which Yahweh's relationship is directly with his people and in which the role of the king is little more than that of an exemplary Israelite. The effect of this revision was to release Yahweh from state power, to break the connection between the interests of the state and the interests of Yahweh. However, this was an effect accomplished not as a result simply of sophisticated theological reflection in a generally inimical historical context, but rather within the framework of the end of statehood, when a new legitimation had to be developed for a new way of relating to Yahweh brought about by historical events. The state of Israel had been destroyed, the political institutions formerly legitimated by the pre-exilic Deuteronomist had come to an end, the emerging remnant, in a condition of political and economic dependence on a foreign power, is compelled to establish its religious identity without recourse to political organs of statecraft through which it could be implemented.

The Deuteronomistic understanding of the nature of Israel in its relationship with Yahweh developed in a fundamental way between the first and second editions of the history. While the first edition perceived Israel as a royal state, centred on the capital and the Jerusalem temple, with the king as successor to Moses in the role of lawgiver and mediator between Israel and Yahweh, in the second edition this has greatly changed. The revision of the Deuteronomistic History introduced an emphasis on ethical demand (Deut. 19–25) together with theological commentary such as 2 Kings 17:7–23, 34b–41, as a way of effecting a change in focus from the king to Israel as a whole: it is on the people in the first instance and not on the king that

responsibility for the welfare of Israel rests. The monarchy is now (Deut. 17:14–20) one of Israel's institutions rather than the divine foundation on which Israel's welfare rests.

The Pentateuch

Since the book of Deuteronomy both closes the Pentateuch and opens the Deuteronomistic History, the question of the relationship of the Deuteronomistic History with the Pentateuch is an immediate and obvious problem. This is one of a series of fundamental issues in Pentateuchal criticism today, which has led to a situation in which it is difficult to discern anything like consensus on most significant aspects of the topic. In view of the importance of the Pentateuch and its role not only as the 'staging ground for many if not most of the critical questions and methods that later spread to other areas of the biblical literature' (Knight 1985: 263; cf. also Carr 1997: 22), but also indeed as the text on the basis of which Israel's origins have traditionally been discussed and her religious history critically established, the present uncertainty in Pentateuchal criticism has very wide implications. Excellent detailed surveys of the rise and history of the classical critical theories in Pentateuchal criticism are readily accessible (North 1951; Clements 1979; Knight 1985; Nicholson 1998). The delineation of its main trends here is, however, desirable in order to create a general overall context within which the present *status questionis* might be better appreciated.

In so far as the rise of Pentateuchal criticism is to be linked with the questioning of the tradition of its Mosaic authorship, the origins of the critical approach go back to Ibn Ezra in the Middle Ages, but it was not until the mid-eighteenth century that the classical critical theories began to be worked out. On the basis of the use of different divine names, Yahweh and Elohim, in the book of Genesis, Jean Astruc distinguished two independent sources in that book. More detailed studies in the following books by J. G. Eichhorn, G. Ewald, W. M. L. de Wette and others, indicated that the source using Elohim was itself a combination of two sources, one of which had narrative concerns and the other priestly and legal concerns. This led to a distinction between three sources, designated by the sigla P, E and J, while the siglum D was used for Deuteronomy, which was recognized as an independent piece of work. The high point of the development was reached with Ed. Reuss, K. H. Graf and especially J. Wellhausen in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The sources of the Pentateuch had by then been worked out in detail; the contribution of Wellhausen and his associates lay in the absolute and relative dating of these sources. D had long been linked with the reform of Josiah in 621 BC; what now became clear was that P, the priestly and legal source, was later than D, since it presupposed the characteristic D demand for the centralization of worship, while J and E know nothing of D and were to be dated earlier, J being the older of the two and belonging to the time of Solomon. This was a revolutionary development that did not simply result in a stable and comprehensive picture of the process of composition of the Pentateuch, but also had direct implications for the development of an evolutionary view of Israelite religious history.

The first half of the twentieth century saw developments in the position reached by Wellhausen, none of which, at any rate at first, was seen as other than an attempt to refine a position already firmly established. On the one hand, the sources Wellhausen and others had described as the work of individual authors came to be seen as themselves compilations, and so J was divided into J1 and J2 (or J and L, or J and N), with the same being true of P. This approach still continues (Carr 1997: 26ff.), but has perhaps never won the support or interest characteristic of the alternative developments that may be led back to G. von Rad and M. Noth.

Both von Rad and Noth regarded the Pentateuch, and indeed the major sources into which it could be divided, as the final stage in a long process of development. The methods they used to describe that process were, however, different, and their results correspondingly deviated at major points. Von Rad's approach (1966: 1ff.) was form-critical: the Pentateuch, or Hexateuch (since von Rad regarded the Pentateuchal sources as continuing into Joshua), is an elaborate statement of faith that has the character of a creed. It preserves short credal statements that may properly be regarded as its foundation: examples of these are to be found in Deuteronomy 6:20–4 and Joshua 24:2–13, but especially in Deuteronomy 26:5–9. The short historical creed is the basis of the Hexateuch, but it also provides a point of origin by comparison with which it is possible to mark out the major stages by which the Hexateuch developed. There are three of these: first, the creed makes no reference to the revelation at Sinai, and so a major development stage was the building in of the Sinai tradition between Exodus 19 and Numbers 10; secondly, the creed makes only brief reference to the patriarchs, and so the development of this tradition marks a further significant stage; thirdly, the creed makes no reference to the primeval history, and so Genesis 1–11 must be regarded as having been introduced at a stage in the Hexateuch's evolution. It is the Yahwist (the author of the J source), a major theologian of the Solomonic period, who was responsible for these innovations.

The approach adopted by Noth (1948) is in the first instance a development of Wellhausen's literary criticism and thereafter traditio-historical. The literary-critical developments are twofold. First, against those who argued for the extension of the Pentateuchal sources into Joshua, Noth argued that while indeed the older J and E sources did tell of a conquest of the land, they were in time edited into the framework of the Priestly document (1943: 206ff.). The latter is not to be found in Joshua, and in fact has its focus of interest on the events at Sinai and the figure of Moses. With the death of Moses P, and therewith also the earlier documents edited into the framework of P, came to an end (see further Mayes 1983: 17f.). This has clear relevance to the question of the relationship of the Pentateuch with the Deuteronomistic History, for the conclusion is that the Pentateuch was created through the displacement of the story of the death of Moses from the end of Numbers, where it originally belonged, to the end of Deuteronomy presented as Moses' final speech.

Noth's second literary-critical contribution formed the basis for his traditio-historical study. This was the observation that the two older sources J and E are too similar to be wholly independent of each other. Their similarities can be explained only on the basis that they go back to a common original, to which Noth gave the siglum G ('Grundlage'), a source that may have been either oral or written. This

basic source (and in this respect Noth departed in a major way from von Rad) contained all the basic themes of the Pentateuch: patriarchs, exodus, wilderness wandering, Sinai and the conquest of land. The context within which it took its origin was the pre-monarchic Israelite tribal federation, which Noth, making fruitful use of an analogy drawn from later Greek and Roman history, referred to as an 'amphictyony'. At this point Noth's historical understanding worked together with his traditio-historical view to produce a picture of Israel having emerged in the land and having created its identity in the amphictyony through the fusing of the traditions of its constituent groups. On the basis of a detailed analysis of each of the major themes, Noth was able to establish its origin and development in numerous independent traditions fostered by different groups of what later came to comprise amphictyonic Israel.

Although in some respects the work of von Rad and Noth could be seen as complementary, particularly in that von Rad was concerned with the compositional stage of the Hexateuch, whereas Noth was concerned with the pre-compositional stage of the early development of the traditions, there are some major differences between them, particularly in relation to the contribution the Yahwist was understood to have made in the production of the J document. Nevertheless, for several decades their work was considered to point towards the different ways in which future study was to be conducted, and therewith was accepted as effectively confirming the results achieved with the grand synthesis of Graf and Wellhausen.

A number of problems contributed to the breakdown of the programme as determined by von Rad and Noth, and eventually also to the fundamental questioning of the Wellhausen synthesis. As far as von Rad is concerned, the short historical creed came to be recognized as a Deuteronomic composition (Hyatt 1970: 152ff.; Mayes 1979: 332ff.), which could then be seen as a summary coming at the conclusion of a process, rather than a foundational belief statement that initiated it. Noth's proposal of a G source originating in an Israelite amphictyony was doubted for two reasons. On the one hand, the fragmentary character of E, which Noth explained on the basis of its having been preserved only in so far as it differed from J, could rather be understood as the result of E being a redactional level, a stage in the history of development of J (see the review in Knight 1985: 282f.). If this is so, there is no literary-critical argument for a pre-J source. Secondly, the theory of a pre-monarchic Israelite amphictyony as the context of origin of an early G source came under increasing attack (Mayes 1974; 1992): if there was no amphictyony, and Israelite origins were much more fragmented, gradual and unsystematized than that theory suggested, it was difficult to conceive of a context within which such a source, with the identity-creating function that Noth imagined for it, could have emerged. The document P, which Noth argued to have been an independent source used as the final framework for J and E, has also been considered in very different terms. Like E, so P may be seen, particularly in view of the many significant Pentateuchal traditions it does not contain, as a redactional stage rather than a source (Cross 1973: 293ff.). This must then create problems for Noth's argument that the JE conquest story was truncated in favour of the P framework, and so also for his view of the relationship of the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History.

In more recent years, however, the critique has extended beyond this level to bring into question the adequacy of the Wellhausen view in general, with particular attention being directed to the presumed oldest source, J. The critique has come especially from Van Seters (1975, 1992, 1994), Schmid (1976) and Rendtorff (1977). Van Seters (1975: 139ff.) has raised basic questions against the traditio-historical method's claim to be able to trace the oral history of the traditions, and has asserted the primacy of explanations that work with the text as literature. Denying any necessary link between the Genesis story of the patriarchs and non-biblical texts of the second millennium BC, Van Seters has argued for a primary composition in the exilic or post-exilic periods of those materials traditionally seen as JE. This work, which he assigns to the Yahwist, was later supplemented and revised by a priestly editor.

Schmid provided much of the evidence for Van Seters's later argument (see also Blum 1990) that the non-priestly Pentateuchal texts show clear signs of dependence on Deuteronomistic and prophetic traditions. The story of the call of Moses in Exodus 3f. uses a literary form known from classical prophecy and can be understood only against a prophetic background; the plague stories of J show prophetic and Deuteronomistic forms, while many of the wilderness wandering stories are Deuteronomistic. Other general indications of the late date of pre-priestly material in the Pentateuch are the Deuteronomistic covenant theme of the Sinai pericope, the promise of many descendants in the patriarchal traditions reflecting a late time of decline and threat, the near silence of pre-exilic prophecy on much that is fundamental to the Pentateuch (patriarchs, Moses, exodus, Sinai covenant). The historical theology of J is, therefore, a response to a time of crisis and threat to the national religion of Israel and the very identity and existence of the people.

Rendtorff has contributed significantly to the debate in a number of respects. In the first place, he has questioned the possibility of form criticism and tradition history being seen simply as stages with literary criticism in the single continuum of Pentateuchal criticism. Literary criticism as practised by Wellhausen and most others presupposed that the resulting documents or sources were composed by authors with individual styles and ideas, and it was on this basis that J, E, D and P could be distinguished. Form criticism and tradition history, on the other hand, presuppose not authors but compilers who preserved the essential character of the material they collected. Thus, the distinctive characteristics of this material may point not to diverse compilers but rather simply to diversity in the materials collected by any one compiler. Apart from this, Rendtorff questioned in any case the existence of continuous sources in the Pentateuch. The larger units (patriarchs, exodus, Sinai, wilderness wandering, settlement) are relatively isolated: covenant and promise, so central to the patriarchal traditions, are largely absent from the exodus tradition; the Sinai pericope makes only sporadic reference to the exodus and patriarchal promise; the wilderness wandering tradition makes reference to Egypt but never in such a way as to presuppose the tradition of the exodus as a saving act of Yahweh; the settlement tradition in Numbers makes only slight reference to the exodus and the patriarchs. Such connections between these units as do exist are never central to the narratives but belong to an editorial layer that shows links with the ideas and vocabulary of Deuteronomy. This editing was succeeded by a priestly revision that did not constitute the incorporation of an independent source but rather

a further redactional stage in the development of the Pentateuch. It is, however, the earlier Deuteronomic redaction that is of primary significance, since it is this that first brought together the independent larger units within the Pentateuch.

If a connected presentation of the Pentateuchal story is not to be found before the Deuteronomic–deuteronomistic period, and if Deuteronomic–deuteronomistic editing first brought it into existence, then it may follow that the Pentateuch, but in the first instance the Tetrateuch, came to be formed on the basis of the already existing Deuteronomistic History, and indeed as a prologue to that history (Van Seters 1992), and never had independent literary existence. This picture is largely confirmed by Rose's detailed study (1981) of parallel and otherwise related texts in Genesis–Numbers and the Deuteronomistic History, which demonstrated that the general priority is to be assigned to the Deuteronomistic History.

If this is the case, the Tetrateuch is to be seen in the first instance as a creation, within the context of the Deuteronomistic movement, of a prologue to the existing Deuteronomistic History. The later priestly stage of redaction of that material, which covered not only Genesis–Numbers but also the account of the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34, is to be seen as having had as its overall purpose the separation off of the first five books as a separate entity from the Deuteronomistic History. This development should be set against a background in which the Deuteronomistic History could no longer provide a meaningful foundation for the new community. Although temple and monarchy play a less emphatic role in the second edition of that history, there was little possibility that the work could command the adherence of the diaspora, and therewith a foundation for exilic Judaism. The Pentateuch responds to the inadequacies of the Deuteronomistic History in a number of detailed and general ways: it introduces a greater emphasis on social and ethical demands; through its emphasis on promise and on the law as that which was to be obeyed in the land its orientation is to the future rather than to the past. It has been rightly recognized (Clines 1978) that the theme of the Pentateuch is promise and only partial fulfilment of that promise: the Pentateuch holds out for a scattered Israel a strong and explicit hope to sustain it in its powerlessness.

The Pentateuch in its priestly redaction has a quite distinct understanding of the nature of the community, different from that of the Deuteronomistic History. In terms of the distinction drawn by Eilberg Schwartz (1990: 195ff.), membership of the community in the Deuteronomistic History is achieved: one becomes a member by commitment to belief, membership being open to all those willing to make that commitment; in the Pentateuch, on the other hand, membership is ascribed: one is a member through genealogical descent, and without that relationship membership is not possible (see further Mayes 1996: 505ff.). The Pentateuch has carried through a significant and fundamental shift in the perception of the nature of Israel, marking off the borders of the chosen people much more sharply against the world, and, through Genesis 1–11, setting it in a universalistic context.

Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah

In 1943 Noth could write, 'it is generally accepted as certain that in 1 and 2 Chronicles and Ezra and Nehemiah we have but a single work. In this case, there-

fore, in contrast with the analysis of the Deuteronomistic History, there is no need to start with a demonstration of the work's literary unity' (1943: 110; ET 1987: 29). The date of composition of the work, which is based mainly on canonical but also occasional other independent sources, was about 300 BC or later. Its purpose was to demonstrate the legitimacy of the Davidic dynasty and also of the Jerusalem temple as the cultic centre of the Judean kingdom. The author of the work intended to write history, but, by contrast with the Deuteronomistic historian, was ready to adapt his sources to his own purposes. In this respect the Chronicler was a much more independent narrator than the Deuteronomistic historian.

The three topics that have been the subject of continuing study correspond to this outline of Noth's work: the unity of the Chronicler's history in Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah; the sources of that history; and the purpose and theology of the Chronicler.

That Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah form a single literary unit composed by the Chronicler is a view based on a number of observations (see summary and bibliography in Klein 1992a: 993; Jones 1993: 86ff., 121): the conclusion of Chronicles in 2 Chronicles 36:22–3 is repeated in Ezra 1:1–3a; 1 Esdras does not make a distinction, bringing together 2 Chronicles 35–36, Ezra 1–10 and Nehemiah 8; the three books share common language and style; there are theological and ideological links between them. None of these arguments, however, has been found compelling. The first point is a deliberate link that could as easily presuppose independent authorship of Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah as it could indicate any significant level of common authorship. As far as the second is concerned, Williamson (1977: 5–70) sees 1 Esdras as a secondary compilation which at most shows that a part of the Jewish tradition in the second century associated these works. Likewise the third point has not carried conviction: Japhet (1968) has pointed to linguistic differences, while Williamson has concluded from over a hundred supposed similarities that all but six are either irrelevant or may even indicate diversity in authorship. On the final point it has been argued that there is a common understanding of history, and a common interest in genealogies and lists, in the temple, religious occasions and cultic personnel, to be detected throughout all three books. On the other hand, however, there are differences on highly significant subjects: so Chronicles does not share the exclusiveness of Ezra and Nehemiah, in so far as it understands Israel as all those from the twelve tribes faithful to the Jerusalem temple and its cult, and does not share the rejection of the northerners, which is important to Ezra and Nehemiah (see Ezra 4:2f., 9f.); the significance Chronicles attaches to the Davidic dynasty is not shared by Ezra and Nehemiah; Chronicles does not emphasize the exodus in the manner of Ezra–Nehemiah; the frequent references to prophets in Chronicles disappear in Ezra–Nehemiah.

While the matter is still under discussion, it would seem that the balance of probability is not in favour of a single work or a single author. These are independent works that, at a stage not yet clear, came to be associated. Their time of origin is not certain: on the basis of not only the last events it records, but also some internal clues (Klein 1992a: 994f.; 1992b: 732), the composition of Chronicles may be dated to the late fifth or fourth century; for Ezra–Nehemiah, dates of composition are suggested between c.400 and c.300 BC.

The sources used by the authors/editors of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah include both canonical sources and other possible sources. The genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1–9 have been taken from Genesis, Exodus and Numbers, and the subsequent monarchic history of Chronicles has made extensive use of Samuel and Kings. The genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1–9, which probably have a broadly historiographic purpose (see Hoglund 1997: 21ff.; Braun 1997: 98ff.), find parallels in Greek historiography of the fifth and fourth centuries, and intend to show the organization and interrelationship of the members of the Israelite people, and also the continuity of the people through a time of disruption. The arrangement and focus of the material on Judah, Levi and Benjamin suggest that it is integral to the historiographic presentation of Chronicles.

The Chronicler's use of Samuel and Kings is highly selective. Attempts to show that the Chronicler and the Deuteronomistic historian made independent use of a common source (Auld 1994: 22ff.; Rainey 1997: 43ff.), or that the Chronicler used an earlier redaction of the Deuteronomistic History (McKenzie 1985), are probably not persuasive (see Van Seters 1997: 285ff.) even if it is likely that the particular text tradition of the Deuteronomistic History to which the Chronicler had access was not the Masoretic but rather a Palestinian text attested by the Qumran scrolls (see Klein 1992a: 995f.; also the review of the discussion in Williamson 1987b: 107ff.). Recognition of this will slightly modify the view taken of some of the differences between Chronicles and the Masoretic version of Samuel and Kings, but the overall situation remains the same: the Chronicler made selective use of the Deuteronomistic History, effectively rewriting it to suit his purposes. Saul has been dealt with only as an introduction to David (1 Chr. 10); much of the David tradition is omitted, particularly those parts of it, such as the Bathsheba affair, the murder of Uriah and the rebellion of Absalom, that reflected badly on the king; the history of the northern kingdom, except in so far as it impinged directly on Judah, has been passed over in silence.

As far as non-canonical sources are concerned, it is clear that Ezra and Nehemiah make extensive use of such sources, including official decrees and letters, royal and temple records and lists, together with memoirs deriving from both Ezra and Nehemiah (see Klein 1992b: 732ff.; Williamson 1987a). The editorial arrangement and supplementation of these sources is a matter of considerable complexity and dispute, but the use of autobiographical accounts of contemporary history confers a unique historiographical significance on this material (Momigliano 1977: 27f.).

Chronicles, like the Deuteronomistic History, makes reference to sources, including 'the history of Nathan the prophet', 'the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite', 'the vision of Iddo the seer' (2 Chr. 9:29), 'the Commentary on the Books of Kings' (2 Chr. 24:27). That these ever existed as sources under such titles is, however, doubtful: more likely they should be seen as interpretative references to the corresponding sources to which the Deuteronomistic History itself refers (1 Kgs 11:41; 2 Kgs 12:20 [English versions 12:19]), and thus as part of the Chronicler's general interpretative use of the Deuteronomistic History. More difficult, however, is the question of whether or not the Chronicler had available any other pre-exilic sources, outside the canonical texts, for the reconstruction of history. A strongly minimalist

view would be that no such sources have been shown (North 1974: 392; see also Wright 1997: 150ff., with reference to those battle accounts in Chronicles without parallels in Samuel and Kings). Others more open to the possibility that the Chronicler did have access to other sources refer to occasional chronological and other references (Barnes 1997: 106ff.; Klein 1992a: 996f.), or more extensive sources including perhaps especially one from which the list of Rehoboam's fortifications (2 Chr. 11:5–12) is derived (see the summary in Jones 1993: 70f.). One particular study (Knoppers 1997: 184ff.) argues that the Chronicler's depiction of the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham and Hezekiah agrees with what archaeology reveals for the eighth century in relation to urban development in the shephelah and the Judaeen hill country, and the expansion of Jerusalem. Other aspects of the Chronicles description, however, are complicated by archaeology, especially in relation to the aftermath of Sennacherib's campaign, but it seems, nevertheless, that the unique material in Chronicles, when compared with the Deuteronomistic History, cannot all be dismissed as having no historical relevance.

For the structure and theology of Chronicles, the speeches and prayers of kings and prophets (which have no Deuteronomistic parallels) are of basic importance. These are not to be thought of as belonging to an established genre of levitical sermon as von Rad (1966: 267ff.) believed (see Klein 1992a: 998). They are, rather, compositions by the Chronicler that function as structural markers and vehicles for his views (see Klein 1992a: 998; Throntveit 1997: 225ff.; Balentine 1997: 246ff.). They create strong links between David and Solomon, emphasizing the planning and building of the temple as their joint project, and contributing to the overall presentation of this period as the ideal time in Israel's history. Later prophetic speeches, of which there are ten without parallel in the Deuteronomistic History, are concerned with the theme of retribution, which, in a number of cases (2 Chr. 12:1; 16:7–10; 26:16–21), provides the rationale for events reported in Kings. This theme, absent from Ezra and Nehemiah, is addressed to the post-exilic community. The experience of Manasseh (2 Chr. 33) was to be taken as a paradigm for that of the later community and indeed for individuals in that community: evil brought about deportation to Babylon; repentance and prayer to Yahweh led to restoration and renewal (Schniewind 1997: 223).

The Chronicler's theology of retribution is a warning and call to repentance. Restoration and renewal are a prospect for all who repent and acknowledge the Jerusalem temple, including the people of the former northern kingdom. Even though the Chronicler is generally silent on the north, his description of Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chr. 30), to which all Israel was invited, is an invitation also to the northerners of the Chronicler's own day to acknowledge the place of Jerusalem and its temple as the unique legitimate cult centre for all Israel.

A number of aspects of the Chronicler's theology distinguish that work from Ezra and Nehemiah. There also the importance of the temple is indeed emphasized, but in two respects Ezra and Nehemiah are distinct: on the one hand, the restoration and rebuilding is achieved as a result of the support of the Persian authorities with whom a collaborative attitude is effectively encouraged (Klein 1992b: 739f.); on the other hand, the borders of the community are much more sharply defined through the rejection of foreign wives and the identification of the true community as those

who returned from exile. This is a community defined by its strict adherence to the law, and not only by its acknowledgment of the Jerusalem temple as the legitimate cult centre; its hope is for the purging of the community from its imperfections through obedience to the law, rather than for a restoration in which the Davidic dynasty will again receive the steadfast favour of God (2 Chr. 6:42).

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORIOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION

It cannot be our task here to discuss the range of problems that confront the historian in reconstructing the history of Israel, still less to attempt any such reconstruction. It is, nevertheless, necessary that brief reference should be made to the implications for the historian of our discussion of the nature of Old Testament historiography.

It is clear that Old Testament historiography is very much concerned with the past of the present: whether or not it aims consciously to justify and legitimise contemporary practice and institutions by showing their rootedness in antiquity, it most certainly does reflect contemporary issues and concerns that have at their heart the identity and self-understanding of the ancient historian's culture. In all three examples of Old Testament historiography the question of national, cultural and religious identity can be understood as the guiding thread that structures and informs the interpretative process that led to their production. As far the Deuteronomistic History is concerned, its first edition, with its focus on Moses, David and Josiah, together with its centralization criterion of judgment, defines Israel in terms of loyalty to the king and the capital city; the second, exilic, edition, on the other hand, has democratized that understanding mainly through relating Yahweh's royal covenant to the people as a whole, and defining Israel in terms of its loyalty to that covenant. The unconditional royal promise of the first edition is in the second made conditional: with obedience Israel will be restored as the people of Yahweh. That conditional element has not disappeared in the Pentateuch, but here is subordinated to two other concerns: first, that Israel is the chosen people as the result of promise to the patriarchs; secondly, that this promise, of land and descendants, is still held out before the dispossessed people. Israel now understands itself in terms of election, covenant and obedience to the law in the land that has been promised them. The future orientation of the Pentateuch is directed towards a diaspora people living without the institutions of national government. There are, as already noted, substantial differences between Chronicles, on the one hand, and Ezra and Nehemiah, on the other. They all, however, share a fundamental interest in the Jerusalem temple, to the extent that Israel may be understood as a worshipping community. In Chronicles that self-understanding is expressed in a remarkable way, not simply through the centrality of the building of the temple in the idealized period of David and Solomon, but in particular through the evident concern of the author to establish the legitimacy of the second temple by establishing its continuity not simply with the first temple but also with the priestly tabernacle of the Mosaic period (see especially Van Seters 1997: 283ff.). The description of the temple building in 2 Chr. 3ff. not only takes over material from Kings but modifies this in the light of

both the second temple and the priestly tabernacle. Thus, 2 Chr. 3:14, describing what was probably the veil of the second temple, is not to be found in 1 Kings 6, but is derived from the tabernacle description in Exodus 26:31; 36:35. The temple and its rituals have regained this centrality for defining the people of God.

As far as the sources used by Israelite historiography are concerned, it is true that there is much here to assist in the scholarly reconstruction of Israelite history. This is perhaps particularly true of the decrees, letters, records and lists of Ezra and Nehemiah, together with the accounts of Israelite and Judean kings in the books of Kings, themselves evidently derived from official sources (for an extended discussion of the sources used by the Deuteronomist in Kings see Halpern 1988: 207ff.). Other pre-Deuteronomistic material in the Deuteronomistic History, such as the history of the rise of David in 1 Samuel 16 to 2 Samuel 5 and the succession narrative of 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2, has frequently been taken as early historiography that may be used immediately in historical reconstruction. The age of this material is quite uncertain, however, and its clear ideological purpose (on the former see, e.g., Rendtorff 1971: 428ff., and on the latter McCarter 1981: 355ff.) makes its usefulness for historical reconstruction increasingly dubious. A history of Israel is indeed not open to reconstruction without reference to the Old Testament (see the discussion in Miller 1991: 93ff.), but the relevance of Old Testament texts is in the first instance to the time in which they were composed and only after critical evaluation on a case-by-case basis to the times of which they purport to tell.

One must, of course, add to this the point that if ancient historians were motivated, either consciously or unconsciously, by ideological concerns, so also are modern historians. Sasson (1981; see also Oden 1980; Ahlström 1991: 134; 1993: 50) has clearly demonstrated the influence of the contemporary political and cultural context on German and American biblical scholarship, and, in particular, on how the origin and early history of Israel have been portrayed in scholarly reconstruction. The American preference for the 'biblical model', understood in terms of conquest of the new land Israel holds as the gift of God, is not without connection to the national mythology of the origin of the United States; the German preference for a process of peaceful immigration into a cultural and political context that lacked any cohesive national consciousness, leading eventually to the formation of a nation state, may be compared with political developments in the first half of the twentieth century, when Jewish immigration into Palestine led eventually to the establishment of the nation state of Israel; the theory that the ancient Israelite national identity was forged in the creation of a national tradition within the framework of the union of the tribes in an amphictyony expresses also the view of the nature of the nation state and its origins in nineteenth-century German historiography. This uncovering of the hidden influences on biblical scholarship has now been radically extended by those (Whitelam 1996; Davies 1992, 1997) who, while agreeing that there was indeed an 'Israel' of some form or forms in the first half of the first millennium BC, believe that most modern scholarly accounts of the history of Israel are little more than modified versions of the biblical story, which is itself an exilic or post-exilic ideological construction, and in adherence to which modern historians of ancient Israel show their commitment to a particular religious worldview rather than to the requirements of critical historiography.

The sometimes rather strident debate on these issues that characterizes current discussion (see, e.g., the replies to Provan 1995 by Davies 1995; and Thompson 1995) revolves around a number of issues: the ideological nature of biblical texts; the possibly very late date of these texts and also of the sources on which they are based; the relative importance of biblical and non-biblical records, especially the archaeological record; the significance of the interpretative process in the use of sources in historical reconstruction; and the epistemological self-awareness of the historian of today. While the theoretical debate may sometimes seem polarized, on the practical level of actual historical reconstruction it is clear that biblical scholars, while accepting that because of their concern to understand the past certain Old Testament texts may continue to be considered historiographical, are increasingly aware of the significance of the critical use of sources as a basic distinction between biblical and modern historiography, and, consequently, of the necessity in every particular instance to re-evaluate the relative significance of these texts and non-biblical sources for the reconstruction of Israelite history.

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CHAPTER SIX

PROPHECY



Graeme Auld

Nothing connected with biblical prophecy is unproblematic; and that is certainly true of linking the words ‘genre’ and ‘prophecy’. Are we talking about the literary (including oral literary) genres which historical prophets used: about the types of speech or song or memoir or address they adopted or adapted, or even about unique forms only prophets used? Or is our business with the genre(s) or literary characteristic(s) of the whole writings the Bible identifies as prophetic?

The second option seems a safer starting point, and will be followed here. We actually have the prophetic literature as ‘a bird in our hand’. Any history of ancient prophecy we would first have to ‘catch’: to deduce and reconstruct from these same writings. Safer, but not straightforward: there are different Bibles; and different decisions have been made since ancient times about which of their contents are ‘prophetic’. A Christian Bible will identify (only) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, along with Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, as the books of the prophets. And yet writers in New Testament books of that Bible treat David, or the book of Psalms, as prophetic too. A Jewish Bible will not include among its prophetic books Daniel from the list just given. It will group the four ‘books’ of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve as ‘Latter Prophets’, alongside four books of ‘Former Prophets’: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

Questions of genre that start with the literature have to make choices, between one ‘canon’ and the other, or for neither. It has become commonplace among biblical scholars of prophecy to concentrate their attention on those books common to the two canonical listings: simply Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve. In this volume, and convergent with such an approach, the ‘Former Prophets’ of the Hebrew canon are studied as ‘narrative’, along with the books of Chronicles to which they are closely related. And Daniel, ranked with the prophets in the Christian canon, is taken as an example of ‘apocalyptic’ rather than ‘prophecy’. These decisions make sense, but only so far: the relevant material spills over the boundaries. Parts of 2 Kings (in [chs 18–20](#) and [24–5](#)) are virtually identical to portions of Isaiah (36–9) and Jeremiah (52). A further portion of Isaiah (24–7) is often called an ‘apocalypse’. The stories within 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 10 about Elijah and Elisha, and others named and unnamed of similar prophetic ilk, occupy twice as many pages as the

longest book of the ‘minor prophets’ (Hosea), just as the story of the seer Balaam in the Torah or Pentateuch (Numbers 22–4) is twice as long as the book of Jonah. Whether we concentrate on the relevant biblical texts and seek to characterize their genre(s), or whether we try to classify how – keeping or breaking what conventions – historical figures behind these texts may have spoken or written, we must not depart from the canons of the ancients only to become trapped in our own classifications.

‘Prophet’ translates the Hebrew *nabî*, and ‘prophecy’ the related Hebrew verb. The abstract noun corresponding to ‘prophecy’ is very rare, and found only in the latest texts (Neh. 6:12; 2 Chron. 9:29; 15:8). Yet the much more familiar title and verb bearing the sense we expect may have become common later than is often supposed. ‘Prophet’ and its associates such as ‘seer’ and ‘man of God’ are rare in the writings associated with the earlier figures in the collection; and even these figures are located no earlier than the final 160 years of the monarchy of the house of David in Jerusalem (c.740–587 BCE). When they are mentioned, it is to be criticized: the prophets talked about are not the heroes of the books but their opponents. On the other hand, in the latest books from long after the monarchy, ‘prophet’ has become a title of honour suitable for their hero. And it has been argued that we can detect the transition in attitude in the growth of two of the long collections, Ezekiel and Jeremiah. In the (earlier) poetry of Jeremiah, for example, prophets prophecy easy lies by a rival god (2:8; 5:31). In the (developed) prose, Jeremiah is a prophet (1:5) and his God is presented as commending an unnamed succession of prophet servants of the past (25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15). Some hold more conservatively that all the characters whom the Bible calls prophets or seers were also so called in their own time. When they read bitter denunciations of prophets in their books, they remind us that the bitterest feuds are often within the same party. I recognize that this can be true, but suspect that ‘prophet’ is a term that has developed and been used differently within the biblical period as well as after it. What we read in what we call ‘the prophets’ is more presentation than transcript. Despite the open boundaries of the relevant literature, this must strengthen our hunch that our prime business should be to plot the characteristics of the books. Questions of whether historical ‘prophets’ modelled their utterances on lament or love-song or liturgy or wisdom-teaching or excited lyric should be held over.

It has already been noted that the books of Samuel–Kings and of Chronicles are closely related. Mention of a series of narratives within the story of David and his successors in Jerusalem that they share may usefully round off this introduction and lead us to the next point. In the first (2 Sam. 7 // 1 Chron. 17), ‘the prophet Nathan’ was consulted by David about more appropriate housing for ‘the divine ark’ and gave his own response; but that night he received a vision from the deity and was sent to David to report its contents. Next Gad, who declared the divine options to the king, as a message from Yahweh, after David’s sinful census-taking, is described as ‘David’s seer’ (2 Sam. 24 // 1 Chron. 21). Then Jehoshaphat and Ahab, kings of the now separate Judah and Israel, were to make common military cause. They sought divine counsel, first through a large number of (possibly court) prophets, and then of a more independent ‘prophet of Yahweh’. Micaiah first said Yahweh would grant success, but then passed on a message in Yahweh’s name that the supportive prophets

had been made fools of by Yahweh (1 Kgs 22 // 2 Chron. 18). Finally Huldah ‘the prophetess’, when consulted by courtiers of King Josiah about the import of a book found in the temple, replied in two stages, distinguishing between the man who sent them to her and the king who sent them to inquire of Yahweh (2 Kgs 22 // 2 Chron. 34). In each case the intermediary, though differently designated, has a clearly established role at the outset of the story: each is either consulted by the king or is described as the king’s seer. And in three cases (the Gad report is much briefer) clear distinction is made between what the individual says and the divine message with which they are (subsequently) entrusted. In terms of our earlier discussion, these stories may report how things were from David to Josiah; but equally, they may be a projection back to the time of the monarchy of later views about established ‘prophets’ of Yahweh. Be that as it may, oral formula or literary genre, each of these reports introduces us to the prophet as divine messenger – ‘This is what Yahweh has said . . .’.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA

The most extended connected collection of narratives about prophets occupies the central third of the two books of Kings. There is no body of text elsewhere in the Bible with a similar range of interests, yet its concerns intersect with those of many other texts. 1 Kings 17 portrays at the outset an intimate relationship between Elijah and Yahweh (‘whom I face standing’), and between what Yahweh and what Elijah say: dew and rain will return only at Elijah’s word. Elijah simply instructs King Ahab, without invoking divine authority, having first decided when he will let himself be seen by the king (18:15–19). 1 Kings 17 uses the phrase ‘the word of Yahweh’ more than any chapter that follows, but in an unusual way. Yahweh’s word is not a message to be delivered (at least not until vv. 14, 16), but a private communication to his servant (vv. 2, 5, 8). This feature is reminiscent of the opening chapter of the book of Jeremiah.

These sixteen chapters of Kings are set in the period of Ahab and his immediate successors, and foreground the issue of power. Authority and who bears it – who has ‘servants’ and sends ‘messengers’ and whose word counts – is a recurring theme. Ahab, though king of Israel, is effectively belittled between prophet and foreign queen: Elijah and Jezebel instruct him in similar terms (18:41, 42; 19:5, 7, 8). Even where Elijah’s role is taken by an anonymous prophet (20:13, 22), the issue remains whether those who have servants and send messengers also have authority. The king himself becomes nameless for long periods (2 Kgs 4–8), as if a cipher rather than a historical personality. Is it because these stories are so critical of Ahab and his house that they can hardly bear to name the royals? Or do the tales issue from a much later period, and simply use as props the names of very wicked kings of the past, for stories in which the details of the civil power are less important than the claims of men of god and prophets. Elisha relates to Elijah as Joshua to Moses: servant to master; lesser to greater; and of course both Elisha and Joshua have ‘saving’ as an element in their names and cross the Jordan dryshod. There are established structures within prophecy; and Elisha is portrayed as in a leadership role among the prophets (6:1–7; 9:1–3).

Closely related, though subordinate, is the topic of the second story in the opening chapter: the ‘man of god’ as agent of, or intercessor for, divine healing. The reviving of the son of the widow who had fed Elijah (17:17–24) is the first of several stories in these chapters about healing or non-healing, and is followed by King Ahaziah (2 Kgs 1), Elisha’s Shunammite hostess (2 Kgs 4), the Syrian army commander (5), and king of Syria in Damascus (8). The widow’s words that end the first of these stories make explicit how they all reinforce the main theme: ‘Now I know . . . that Yahweh’s word in your mouth is truth.’ A further notable element of this story is the role of action alongside words: Elijah stretches himself over the dead child three times as well as calling on God. Sitting with face between knees and sending his servant back and forwards seven times precede the coming of the rain (1 Kgs 18:41–4). Elisha is summoned by Elijah throwing his mantle over him – and Elijah stresses the ambiguity of this action. With the same mantle thrown in the Jordan and Yahweh, God of Elijah, invoked, the waters are divided for Elisha to cross (2 Kgs 2:13–14). And Elisha’s last ‘action’ is posthumous: a corpse dropped in his grave that touches his bones revives and stands up (13:21).

The term ‘prophet’ is in fact quite sparingly used in 1 Kings 17–2 Kings 10: and most often in plural phrases such as ‘one of the prophets’, or ‘the prophets of Baal’. Elijah is just called ‘prophet’ twice: once in his own words (18:22), where he notes he only is left ‘a prophet for Yahweh’, and once where the narrator presents him as ‘prophet’, precisely where he calls on the God of the ancestors of his people for help in the contest that will settle the allegiance of his nation (18:36). When the king of Syria suspects a traitor among his own people, his courtiers explain the problem as ‘Elisha the prophet who is in Israel’ (6:12). This nicely picks up the words an Israelite slave in Syria had used to commend ‘the prophet who is in Samaria’ to the same (?) king of Syria (5:3); and may be a deliberate counter to ‘the king who is in Samaria’ of 1 Kings 21:18 – prophet rather than king as the real authority in Israel/Samaria

JEREMIAH

Jeremiah is one of three large books in the prophetic collection; and, like the others, it is very varied in its contents. It is also distinctive among all books of the Bible, not so much in being known to us in two different forms, but in the extent to which these two texts differ. The originally Hebrew text translated and preserved in the ancient Greek Bible (Septuagint) is some one-seventh shorter than what became the synagogue text. And it is that longer Hebrew text that is familiar from standard modern translations. Its contents are also differently arranged. The two versions are most alike in the first half (1:1–25:13), which also contains much of the poetry in the book. They are also broadly similar, as far as amount of material is concerned, in the section ‘about the nations’. These six chapters are also mostly poetical. However, both the placing of this section and its internal arrangement are different in the two texts. In the shorter version of the book preserved in Greek, it comes at the start of the second half (26–31); in the traditional Hebrew text, it comes at the end (46–51). The order of the nations is also varied: most notably the longest portion, the one on Babylon, comes in the middle of this section in the middle of the Greek

version of Jeremiah, but at the end of the nations at the end of the Hebrew version. The Hebrew version is very much longer than the Greek in the remaining twenty chapters; and these are almost entirely narrative prose, but for [chapters 30–1](#) (Masoretic Text).

It is easy enough to state these differences, but harder to explain them. We have to reckon with at least three different sorts of activity. Many of the additions to the prose tradition are simple amplifications, ‘dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s’ – such as adding ‘the king’ or ‘the prophet’ after someone’s name. Others are more substantial ‘clarifications’, of the sort an official may give after a politician’s statement has been challenged: sometimes explaining more clearly what was said; sometimes reusing the original but problematic words to state what ‘should have been said’. And the third sort is deliberate rearrangement, as best illustrated in the moving of the chapters ‘about the nations’ from middle to end or end to middle, and the parallel adjustment within them of the placing of Babylon. That third sort of activity at least had required a substantial editorial decision. Amplifying and clarifying could have been – and probably were – a more gradual process. McKane has written of poetry generating prose commentary, and prose itself generating further prose; and has helpfully called the developing book of Jeremiah a ‘rolling corpus’ (1986: l–lxxxiii).

As I attempt to describe the ‘genre’ of this book, it is vital to include coming to terms with the evidence I have briefly reviewed of a tradition in process. That process is not simply deduced from the differences between two ‘snapshots’: the Greek and Hebrew texts. The book starts by dating Jeremiah’s reception of the divine word up to the month when Jerusalem was taken captive (1:3); and the closing chapter gives the same report of that capture as the end of Kings. Yet the book also reports in extended prose narrative Jeremiah’s continuing mediation of that divine word in the years that followed. Granted that the book documents the extension of the tradition and a ‘rolling’ process of commentary generated by the tradition, is it possible to describe the origins?

For most readers, these beginnings are with Jeremiah in the latter years of the kingdom of Judah and with the poetry of the book. Much of the poetry in the first half of the book is critical of Israel; [chapter 2](#) provides a good sample. It mostly addresses ‘you’ in the second person, but also talks about ‘Israel’ in the third (vv. 3, 14, 26). The first example makes clear that this variation occurs within a single unit:

I remember the loyalty of your youth,
your love as a bride,
how you followed me in the desert,
in a land not sown.
Israel was holy to Yahweh,
the first fruits of his harvest.
All who ate of it were held guilty;
disaster came upon them,
says Yahweh. (2:2–3 NRSV, adapted)

Translation into the English ‘you(r)’ masks the much greater variety of the Hebrew: sometimes feminine singular (vv. 2, 16–25, 33–7), once masculine (vv. 26–8), and sometimes plural (vv. 5, 9–10, 29–31). Some readers prefer to see each of these transitions as evidence that several, short, once-separate oral units have been secondarily assembled into a larger structure. For others, the shift from feminine to masculine, from singular to plural, no more signifies distinct origin of short sayings than the shift from you to s/he or they (already a feature of subunits such as 2:2–3, 14–19, 26–8). The shifting differentiation in Hebrew of ‘you’ simply follows the kaleidoscope of images, from faithless lover (female) to thief (male). The prevailing alternation, between plural and feminine singular, is a natural consequence of the metaphor that controls the whole argument: Yahweh as Israel’s aggrieved husband. Marital complaint leads to divorce, and on to the further question of whether – if Israel has remarried (to Baal) – there can be any hope of restoring the first marriage (3:1–5). The rest of that chapter, up to 4:4, explores that question both more and less hopefully, in poetry and prose, and from a number of angles: glimpses of McKane’s corpus as it rolls.

Chapters 4–6 comprise some of the most striking, and certainly excited, poetry in the whole book. They conjure up the approach to Jerusalem of a dread, fast-moving, mounted peril from the north; the havoc it will cause; and the double blindness of the population: to the impending disaster, and to the fact that it is their rejection of their God that has brought it close to them. An ‘I’ speaks poignantly through these poems: sometimes as anguished witness (4:19–22), but more often identifying with the deity. The most nightmarish picture is of creation itself undone, stage by stage:

I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void;
and to the heavens, and they had no light. (4:23)

The first half of the largely prose chapter that follows (7:1–8:3) reports a proclamation Jeremiah had to make in the temple of Jerusalem. The rhetoric is similar to much in the books of the Former Prophets; and so, like them, it is often called ‘Deuteronomistic’. It restates in more ample prose topics broached more tersely towards the end of the preceding poetry (6:16–21) about the folly of departing from the ‘ancient paths’ and then supposing that expensive offerings to Yahweh will win back his favour. It is thoroughly plausible to explain this so-called ‘temple sermon’ as prose generated from the poetry.

The first chapter of the book concerns the divine call of Jeremiah. Verses 4–10 report the commissioning of a spokesman: the deity has known and consecrated him from before he was; has put his words in his mouth; and has appointed him ‘prophet to the nations’. The focus on mouth, and word, and ability to speak, resume the immediate introduction: ‘Now the word of Yahweh came to me saying’; and also the key terms of the title verses: ‘The words of Jeremiah . . . to whom the word of Yahweh came . . .’. The remainder of the chapter starts by reporting briefly two visions, both introduced again by ‘Now the word of Yahweh came to me, saying’. For Jeremiah, as we saw for Elijah, this formula was used for a private communication from the deity. The first vision, of an almond rod, is explained as Yahweh

watching over the efficacy of his word. The second, of a blown/fanned pot facing away from the north, signifies the disaster that will come from that direction. Readers debate how much of a visionary Jeremiah is depicted as being. Many urge that the rhetoric of this opening chapter, as of the book as a whole, thoroughly subordinates vision to word and message. I would prefer to claim them finely balanced, and to call in support the very visual nature of the poetry we have observed in the immediately following chapters.

Four narratives within [chapters 11–20](#) describe and explain symbolic actions observed, or undertaken, or possibly imagined or play-acted, by Jeremiah: a visit to a potter (18:1–11), breaking a pot (19:1–15), remaining without wife and children (16:1–9), and spoiling a loin-cloth in the Euphrates (13:1–11). A longer set of passages (14:1–15:9) conveys Judah's calamity, her attempts to plead with the deity, and Yahweh's insistence despite his own distress that Jeremiah should not intercede. In and through these reports we read a series of haunting and interlinked poems, most reminiscent of the many laments among the Psalms. Associated prose passages attribute the occasion of some of them to trouble from family and neighbours (11:21–3), unspecified plots (18:18), and official persecution (20:1–6). It is particularly hotly debated whether these prose settings have been extrapolated and developed from the poetry (as was suggested above of 7:1–15 from 6:16–21) or whether they are independent evidence of Jeremiah's actual life. That discussion is more complicated because the more expansive Hebrew tradition maximizes the impression that the laments and protests are individual to Jeremiah, that he is suffering for what he has said; the terser Septuagint suggests that some of these argumentative poems are the response of the community to Jeremiah's hard words.

The oracles about the nations represent some of the finest poetry in the whole book. Most of these nations, disposed so differently in the two versions we possess, are neighbours of Jeremiah's people. The descriptions of Moabites, Philistines, and others, and threats against them, exhibit detailed knowledge of their towns and other geographical features. This is much less true of Babylon, treated at greater length, and placed very deliberately in each version for maximum effect. Chaldea is certainly an occasional alternative, and the god Bel is mentioned once. But it is 'Babel' itself (Babylon is the Greek form) that is constantly intoned, some sixty times in the two chapters: a bell tolling its own doom. What occasioned these poems is much more obscure. There are similar collections in several prophetic books. And, as we know from their own texts, some of Israel's neighbours conducted formal execrations of their enemies. We should at least note that there is a tension between the threat to 'Babel' in these chapters and Babylon's role as Yahweh's agent in Jeremiah 27–9.

The extended narratives (Jeremiah 26–45, or 32–51 [LXX]) are set in the time of the last two kings in Jerusalem and in the aftermath of the city's destruction. They are interrupted by just two largely poetic chapters (30–1): the book of fortunes restored (30:2–3). Similar hopes are found briefly stated here and there in Jeremiah. However, in these chapters the themes of healing and recovery and return and replanting and replenishment are more fully developed: Israel's offspring will cease to be a nation only when the order of heavenly bodies and of tides comes to an end (31:35–7).

Two rather different models suggest themselves for the development of the book of Jeremiah. McKane's 'rolling corpus' helps explain the growth of many smaller clusters or units. Alongside we have to posit some not very intrusive contributions of an ordering, editorial sort. The book as a whole offers an explanation of the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, and of many of their neighbours. But it looks beyond this to the ruin of the overweening ruiner, Babel; and to restoration after punishment of some of Yahweh's people. No-one can prove that the tradition does not go back to a historical Jeremiah. Equally, it is impossible to deduce with any certainty how much of it might go back, or which elements do. The sorts of material I have sketched have been observed as arranged in a book. Plausibly earlier elements may of course be detached from it; but it is no longer clear how these might be reassembled.

ISAIAH

The notion of poetry that cannot all be attributed to the same original poet, or even collection, provides us with a ready transition to the book of Isaiah. The most obvious point to start a discussion of Isaiah and genre is by noting that it has quite the highest proportion of formal poetry of all the Latter Prophets. While Jeremiah and Ezekiel both start with a commission narrative, the opening chapter of Isaiah samples various themes that are characteristic of the book. Not until Isaiah 6 do we find a narrative at all like Jeremiah 1 or Ezekiel 1–3; and it opens the largely narrative passage Isaiah 6–8 (or 6:1–9:7), which apparently interrupts the progression from the series of 'woe' passages in [chapter 5](#) to the related material in 9:8–10:15. The positioning of Isaiah 6 taken together with its similarity to the vision of Micaiah (in 1 Kgs 22 // 2 Chron. 18, already mentioned above) suggests that the function of Isaiah's vision of the divine king was not to inaugurate his role as seer or prophet. It may have been intended rather to underscore as valid the paradoxical divine commission to render his people blind, deaf, and insensate (6:9–10).

Jeremiah, as we already noted, begins (1:1–3) by envisaging a role for Jeremiah till the fall of Jerusalem; and it ends with a report of that calamity (52). Some of the narratives within the book do in fact carry the story further than that apparent limit. And yet, however much later these may have been written, the story they tell is not itself prolonged beyond the lifetime of Jeremiah. Isaiah is a very different sort of book in this respect too. The title verse locates the contents of the book in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. And it is true that the sparse narratives are located mostly in the reigns of Ahaz (7–8) and Hezekiah (36–9). Even the poetry within the first half of Isaiah is hardly explicit about later situations. 'Assyria' may occasionally function (as in 31:8?) as an implicit symbol of a later imperial power; and many have read the promise of a 'shoot from the stock of Jesse' (11:1–9) as implying that the line of David no longer rules in Jerusalem (that the 'stock' intends the stump of a felled tree). And yet all this is true only of the first thirty-nine chapters. From Isaiah 40 a wholly different situation pertains. Imperial Assyria has been displaced by Babylon, which has conquered Jerusalem. The advent of Cyrus some fifty years further on is already in focus (44:28; 45:1) together with the associated fall to his Persian forces of proud Babylon and her gods

(46–7). And the closing eleven chapters (56–66) apparently address a still later period. There is no gainsaying a long period of development. And yet all these judgments about Isaiah 40–66 depend on the internal testimony of their poetic materials: there are no dates; and there is no narrative context, whether accurate or contrived.

The first half of the book is probably the most complex. We have noted that the unity of situation in the period of Assyrian menace is barely challenged openly. Yet we have to note that Babylon's later role is anticipated: it has pride of (first) place (13–14) in the section about the nations (13–23); and an embassy from the distant king of Babylon congratulates Hezekiah on his recovery (39). What in fact contributes to the unity of the whole book is the unspecific future reference of much of it. Nearer the beginning of the book ([chs 2–3](#)), 'the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty . . .' (2:12). And the phrase 'on that day' is used to link additional threats (2:20; 3:18; 4:1) to the principal one. Yet after this first insistence that Yahweh's day is 'against', 'that day' becomes a focus of hope: already and most surprisingly in 4:2–6, but see also 11:10, 11:16; 12:1–6; 28:5–6. Expressions of confident hope become much more common throughout Isaiah 40–66, and come to a climax in the radical promise that Yahweh is making a new heavens and new earth (66:22–3).

The first half of the book makes important use of the language of mourning. In 5:8–23 there are six longer or shorter units that begin the same way. It matters little whether we translate their opening words 'Woe to those who . . .' or 'Ah you who . . .'. But we do need to know that the Hebrew *hōy* that starts them all was used in lamentation over the dead. Singing a dirge over the still living people was an eloquent and not so subtle threat that they no longer deserved to live. The theme is continued, with the associated formal introduction, in Isaiah 10 – first rounding off the threat against Jerusalem's establishment (10:1–4); but then mourning (the king of) Assyria (10:5–14), too arrogant to envisage that he too was a disposable agent of Yahweh (10:15). The first group of these ironic laments immediately follows a love-song, or more strictly an aggrieved lover's song, turned entrapment parable (5:1–7). The treacherous vineyard is symbol at the same time of the beloved and of Israel; and Judah and Jerusalem are called to witness Yahweh's case against Israel before it is made plain to them that they had been the choicest plants of his vineyard.

Isaiah 28–33 plays a set of variations on these themes. The ironic *hōy* laments are now set further apart from each other (28:1; 29:1,15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1). However, not only do they furnish the elements that give these six chapters a shape; but, more importantly, they recapitulate the argument we have just reviewed in [chapters 5 and 10](#). Isaiah 28:1–4 mourns the pride of Ephraim in Israel's heartlands; but talk is subtly turned to Zion in the course of the chapter. Ariel (29:1) is code for Jerusalem; and it is the policy of the court in that city that is lamented in 29:15–16; 30:1–5; and 31:1–3. The last lament of the series hints, in all brevity (33:1), at the fate of disposable Assyria – but mentions no name. Typical of the movement of the book as a whole, this lament over the biter about to be bit retains its rootedness in a real world of the ancient past but is increasingly open to new futures. The rest of the chapter develops rich images of divine graciousness to Zion; and these continue in Isaiah 34–5:

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom . . .
And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (35:1, 10 NRSV)

Much of the intervening material relates to other nations (13–23). We have noted that Babylon occupies a large space at the beginning of this section (13–14), rather than at middle or end as in the two versions of Jeremiah. Moab is also prominent (15–16), as in Jeremiah. Damascus, Ethiopia, and Egypt follow (17–19). A feature of all these chapters is the amount of added prose comment and other secondary material linked by ‘in that day’. The contents of Isaiah 20–2 are more varied; but [chapter 23](#) reads as a lament at the fate of Tyre (and Sidon):

Wail, O ships of Tarshish,
for your fortress is destroyed. (23:1 NRSV)

The following so-called ‘apocalypse’ opens with desolation on a worldwide scale, even involving shame for sun and moon in the face of Yahweh’s glory as he reigns on Zion and in Jerusalem. The dragon in the sea will be killed (27:1); ‘death will be swallowed up for ever’ (25:8); and a series of threats in other parts of the book is turned to promise, such as the song of the vineyard at the beginning of [chapter 5](#) (27:2–6).

From [chapter 40](#), while the material is still poetic, its character changes substantially. The architecture of Isaiah 40–55 in particular is on an altogether more ample scale. Some points of continuity can be advanced, but there is also a clear change in voice. Those portions within Isaiah 1–39 that most obviously anticipate or may be related to Isaiah 40–55 are in fact those that stand out as most different within the first half (34–5, for example). McKane’s description of Jeremiah as a ‘rolling corpus’ works quite well for Isaiah 1–39 also, although the model itself requires adaptation: most of what can be seen as generated in Isaiah from the earlier poetry is further poetry rather than prose. However, to do some justice to the ‘genre’ of the book of Isaiah as a whole, to help define how it differs in nature from its neighbours, we require a more explicitly organic image. Two once separate and distinctive organisms have (been) combined to their mutual benefit: much of Isaiah 1–39 provides an excellent setting for Isaiah 40–55; and this vital force now so close to it has influenced the further development of the host.

Tracking how two distinctive divine titles are used in different parts of Isaiah and in the other prophetic books is instructive. The first is ‘the Lord of hosts’ (Yahweh Sabaoth). It is very common in Jeremiah, and quite absent from Ezekiel. It is also common throughout much of the Book of the Twelve, but absent from Hosea and Joel. Within Isaiah, it is very frequent throughout [chapters 1–39](#); rare in Isaiah 40–55 (six times only); and absent from the final eleven chapters. That suggests that the closing chapters are as distinctive in this respect as Hosea and Ezekiel.

The other expression is the divine title ‘the holy one of Israel’. This is relatively common in Isaiah and very rare elsewhere. The report of Isaiah’s vision uses the first title, and draws particular attention to the divine holiness (6:3 NRSV):

Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.

The way they talk about the holy marks off the closing chapters from the rest of the book. ‘The holy one of Israel’ is mentioned thirteen or fourteen times in Isaiah 1–39, and a similar number in Isaiah 40–55. Yet towards the end of the book the title is found only in Isaiah 60:9, 14; and in these eleven chapters ‘holy’ refers now to Yahweh’s mountain or city, his courts, or house, his people or spirit or day.

It is common to read chapters 56–66 as a series of appendices or responses, and mostly to chapters 40–55. However, if that is true, these closing chapters have escaped the influence of ‘the LORD of hosts’ and ‘the holy one of Israel’. And yet the spirit of these chapters has also influenced the opening half of the book. Isaiah 1 anticipates themes in Isaiah 65–6. ‘They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain’ concludes the first of the two promises of ‘new heavens and a new earth’ (65:17–25 and 66:22–3); and the way it uses ‘holy’ is more at home in 65:25 than at the end of the promise of new life from Jesse’s stock (11:1–9).

That divine promise will be connected with a royal figure related to David, as stated in at least the [first part](#) of that passage (11:1–5) is, however, a view found only in the first half of the book. There are just two other relevant passages. Isaiah 9:1–7 follows a puzzling dark passage at the end of [chapter 8](#) with a promise of seeing a great light: a child born, a son given, will have authority on the throne of David and his kingdom. Then Isaiah 32:1–8 conjures a vision of just and right-ruling kings and princes:

Each will be like a hiding-place from the wind,
a covert from the tempest,
like streams of water in a dry place,
like the shade of a great rock in a weary land. (32:2 NRSV)

This latter passage does not mention David or his family. In similar vein, as already noted, the neighbouring Isaiah 33:1 no longer identifies the destroyer as Assyria. In that next chapter, the king whom ‘your eyes will see . . . in his beauty’ (33:17) is almost certainly divine. That is quite explicit in Isaiah 41:21, where ‘the king of Jacob’ is none other than Yahweh. Corresponding to this development, the ‘servant of Yahweh’ in Isaiah 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; and 52:13 – 53:12 is described as having some characteristics of the ideal king; but the word ‘king’ is never used of him – that is a word now suitable only for God.

Isaiah has proved quite the most popular and influential of the prophetic books throughout the centuries – among both Jewish and Christian readers. This reputation rests in part on the innate quality of its sustained poetic rhetoric, which draws on the deep wellsprings of the other and older poetic traditions represented in the Bible: of psalmody and wisdom. It rests also on the prominence throughout, but

especially in chapters 40–55, of its promise of divine deliverance or salvation – a theme supported by Isaiah’s very name: ‘Yahweh is salvation’. Within Christianity it has come to be known as ‘the fifth gospel’. The evocative openness of the poetic expression allied with its extended discursiveness have encouraged theological reflection.

THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

The Book of the Twelve is manifestly a collection of books; and it is useful to deal with it next for reasons negative and positive. On the one side, it is important not to allow our reading of Ezekiel to overinfluence our approach to the other prophetic texts. On the other, the Twelve deserve both comparison and contrast with Isaiah. Like Isaiah, they (at least Hosea, Amos, and Micah among them) are located explicitly in the eighth century BCE by their introductory verses; and, like Isaiah, the later parts of the collection address a situation well into the post-exilic period of restoration. Like Isaiah their material is mostly poetic, though to a lesser extent the last three books, unlike the end of Isaiah, are in prose. Like Isaiah, the Twelve have figured more prominently in commentary since ancient times – our documentation for this is as early as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Perhaps related to the last point, the text of the Twelve and of Isaiah has been more stable than that of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But all these points of comparison serve only to underscore the one key contrast: the Twelve make the variety of voice and period quite explicit, while all of the voices in the book of Isaiah are anonymous and undated, but one.

It is in fact very hotly debated just in what sense the Twelve are a ‘book’. The Wisdom of Ben Sirach, from the second century BCE, mentions them together briefly as the twelve prophets (49:10), but names none of them – suggesting, for this reader, that they have merged into a single entity. Together they fit readily on a single parchment scroll somewhat shorter than any of the big three prophetic books; and there is such a scroll of the Twelve from Qumran, also dated to around 150 BCE. However, fitting on one scroll is a very minimal definition of what it means to be a book, although an acceptable one. The number twelve would imply either deliberate selection and patterning or totality and comprehensiveness, or both.

The most obvious connections linking individual ‘books’ within the collection are between immediate or at least close neighbours. A good example are the promises at the end of Joel, which we find again at beginning and end of Amos:

The LORD roars from Zion,
and utters his voice from Jerusalem. (Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2 NRSV)

The mountains shall drip sweet wine,
the hills shall flow with milk. (Joel 3:18 NRSV; [Amos 9:13])

It is argued either that the end of Joel provides an envelope for Amos; or, according to the reverse order in the Greek Bible, that the beginning and end of Amos are resumed together at the close of Joel. Joel 2:32 and Obadiah 17 are very closely related – and these books are neighbours in the Greek Bible. At the other end of

the collection, Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 share much significant vocabulary; and Malachi opens the same way as the immediately preceding three-chapter units, Zechariah 9–11 and 12–14. It is much harder to decide whether each of these features was original to the short ‘book’ in question, and such shared features influenced the ordering of the collection; or whether at least some of the links were created by the editors who gave the Twelve its shape.

No answer should be attempted without noting the much wider relationships involved. Isaiah 2:2–4 records the same famous promise of a role for the mountain of the Lord’s house in days to come as we read in the first three verses of Micah 4:1–4. Joel 1:15 and Isaiah 13:6 both liken the coming ‘day of Yahweh’ to destruction (*šd*) coming from the Almighty (*šdy*). Several of the twenty-one verses within Obadiah’s ‘vision’ (quite the shortest ‘book’ in the Hebrew Bible) are found in a different arrangement in Jeremiah’s (not many fewer) words ‘about Edom’ (49:7–22). The Lord roars and utters his voice in Jeremiah 25:30 as well as in Joel 3:16 and Amos 1:2, but now ‘from on high’ and ‘from his holy habitation’. We noted above that ‘the LORD of hosts’, so common in Isaiah 1–39, occurs only six times in chapters 40–55, four of these in the statement ‘the LORD of hosts is his name’. This formulation is a feature of Jeremiah and of Amos. Are these allusions in one book to another? Or developments from one book to another? Or originally anonymous or traditional material taken up independently into different collections?

There is a historical or chronological aspect to the ordering of the Twelve. This is true first of all in terms of external history. Hosea and Amos deal explicitly with northern Israel (or Ephraim, as Hosea calls the people of the north), which was overrun by Assyria in the final third of the eighth century BCE; and come at the beginning. Micah, dealing with Judah towards the end of the same century, but making no mention of the north, is set in sixth place. Finally, Haggai–Zechariah–Malachi, dealing in different ways with the restoration situation in the Persian period, round off the collection. But there is also (at least some) development from text to text. One obvious example is the way in which Zechariah 13:2–6 reworks part of Amos 7:10–17. That story of Amos’s encounter with the ‘priest of Bethel’ is itself an addition to the book of Amos from a late period, connected with other late prophetic narratives in 1 Kings 13 and 2 Chronicles 25; but the development in Zechariah of the ‘I am no prophet’ theme must belong to a more advanced period still. Another example of development, though it is less clear in which direction, is where Joel 3:10 (NRSV) urges, in contrast to Isaiah 2:4 // Micah 4:3,

Beat your ploughshares into swords,
and your pruning-hooks into spears;
let the weakling say, ‘I am a warrior.’

There is considerable variety within many of the books of the Twelve, even the shorter ones. Zephaniah sounds in only three chapters many of the notes heard throughout the whole corpus. And argument for authorship by several hands is quite as energetic in relation to small books of only three chapters such as Zephaniah, or Joel and Habakkuk and Nahum as for the longer Micah, or even Isaiah.

Much the greater part of the material in the Twelve is poetic. In most of these books, narrative is rare and therefore all the more prominent. Hosea in first place opens with three chapters that have proved very difficult to interpret and have tended to draw attention away from the rest of the book. Narrative panels in Hosea 1:1 – 2:1 and 3:1–5 frame mostly poetic material in 2:2–23. In the first, Hosea is commanded by God to take to himself ‘a wife of whoredom’ and have ‘children of whoredom’ by her (1:2). In the second, he is to ‘love a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress, just as Yahweh loves the people of Israel’ (3:1). Yet it is far from clear (1) whether the same woman is intended in the two descriptions, (2) whether we are reading the report of acted parable(s) or theatre, or (3) whether we should suppose the reports are to be read as symbolic or visionary. In fact the questions of genre that these chapters pose should remind us of some of the reports in Jeremiah 11–20. Put in another way, these narratives evoke powerfully the pain and the persistence in the deity’s relationship with his people; but they leave tantalizingly obscure whether such painful and persistent love was also symbolically enacted in the life of Hosea to whom the divine word was spoken (1:1–2; 4:1).

One whole ‘book’ of the Twelve is in its entirety a prophetic narrative, though in fact the whole story of Jonah is not very much longer than the opening three chapters of Hosea. It is very skilfully composed in two almost matching panels ([chs 1–2](#) and [3–4](#)), each inviting reconsideration of how the other should be read. The end of the first panel is a song or psalm of thanksgiving (2:3–10); and the extra degree of openness involved in interpreting that poem artfully complicates the mutuality of the two halves of the story. Jonah appears to be one of the latest books in the Hebrew Bible, not least because for all its brevity it shows good evidence that its author knew many of the others – from Elijah to Joel. In fact, there is some evidence in the second-century scroll from Qumran already mentioned that it appeared as the last of the Twelve. Both its subject and its date encourage us to read it not as a story about a historical Jonah, but as an exploration of the divine nature, and of the phenomenon of prophecy itself.

EZEKIEL

The book of Ezekiel is very different yet again. In more desperate moments, the commentator must wonder whether or in what sense ‘prophecy’ is *the* ‘genre’ to which all of these books and collections belong, or whether the attempt to probe and explain that claim simply exposes how disparate they all are. Ezekiel is the most exotic and the most orderly at the same time. The language of the book is remarkably novel within the Bible as a whole. Jeremiah is introduced as being ‘of the priests who were at Anathoth’ (Jer. 1:1); yet the language of his book is remarkably similar to the language of Kings, or even of the Former Prophets as a whole. But Ezekiel is simply ‘the priest’ (Ezek. 1:3); and this book uses a host of priestly categories, though in a non-cultic environment. Apparently, language from the Temple in Jerusalem has been not so much desacralized as resacralized. Monarchy and Temple had been the twin institutions through which God had led and been with his people. After the collapse of both, the book of Ezekiel answered the agonized question whether God was still with his people and leading them, whether he could still be met.

The message of the book has twin foci: on the one side, the awful totality of divine judgment; and, on the other, that God meant his people to survive it. The whole book is in fact an elaborate ‘theodicy’, or justification of the deity: despite the perpetual blackness of Israel’s behaviour in the past, God has not given up, nor will he in the future. Themes are developed much more expansively in Ezekiel than in most prophetic books, apart from Isaiah 40–55. Perhaps it is here that we see the beginnings of prophecy as a written phenomenon. The report of Ezekiel’s vision (1–3) is much more detailed than what we find in the series of five terse visions in Amos 7:1–9; 8:1–3; 9:1–4; or in the two that are part of Jeremiah’s commission (1:11–14); or even Isaiah’s dread sight of the Lord on his throne (6). Amos’s fifth vision (9:1) is of Yahweh at his altar; and Isaiah 6 is often held to evoke experience of the shrine in Jerusalem. But Ezekiel saw the heavens opened while among the exiles; and attempts to describe the indescribable. The book begins by demonstrating that communication between God and a human being is still possible, even although the house of Israel may be too stubborn to hear. And it ends (40–8) with a vision of very different character: no longer the obscurity of what can barely be uttered, but the clarity of a blueprint for a restored Jerusalem, and a working sanctuary, and priestly arrangements within twelve restored tribes, and a stream issuing from near the holy mountain and strong enough to sweeten the Dead Sea – all of this culminating in the naming of the city in the last words of the book: ‘Yahweh will be there’ – implying that the deity can still be met.

The shape and structure of the book can be described in two different ways. It is patterned like the Greek book of Jeremiah. Critique of Ezekiel’s own people is uppermost in [chapters 1–24](#); the central section is made up of sayings against other nations (Ezekiel 25–32); and more hopeful material relating to his own people is found in [chapters 33–48](#). Then an explicit chronological structure operates in much of the text. An absolute date ‘in the fifth year’, and tied to external history, is provided at the outset (1:1–2); and then a system of internal dates takes over. Most of the material is located between the sixth year (8:1) and the twelfth (32:1, 17; 33:21). By no means all the material is dated; however, such dates as are provided are presented in chronological order except for some of the sayings about other nations within [chapters 25–32](#), which appear to have been (re-)arranged topically. Two dates in particular stand out. The final vision of restoration is located in the twenty-fifth (40:1), which may intend a half-jubilee. And Ezekiel 29:17 dates to the beginning of the twenty-seventh year the promise of Egypt to Babylon because the Tyre campaign had been so long and hard.

The nations are grouped and weighted quite differently in Ezekiel’s sayings. Neighbouring Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistines are despatched first in only seventeen verses of prose (Ezek. 25). Tyre follows in a whole series of poems (26–8); and extended threats to Egypt follow (29–32). Babylon, far from being spoken against (and at prominent length, as in Isaiah and Jeremiah), is mentioned only in the role of divine agent: first against Tyre (26:7), and then (because the king of Babylon had not been sufficiently rewarded by its plunder for his people’s very hard work in reducing Tyre) against Egypt (29:18; 30:10; 32:11).

For all the differences between Ezekiel and the other books reviewed, there are interesting links as well; and some of these have to do with the phenomenon of

prophecy itself. Ezekiel is never directly addressed as ‘prophet’ in the book; but some thirty times the deity instructs him using what becomes a stock phrase: ‘Son of man, prophesy against . . .’. Yet at two significant points in the book, during the opening vision (2:8) and as the theme turns towards restoration (33:33), he is told that his people ‘shall know that a prophet has been among them’. Much the same is said by Elisha to his king (2 Kgs 5:8), distraught that the king of Syria expects healing in Israel for one of his officers: ‘Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.’ There are other themes common to Elijah/Elisha and Ezekiel: the enabling ‘hand of Yahweh’ (1 Kgs 18:46; 2 Kgs 3:15; and six times in Ezekiel); and the ‘spirit/wind of Yahweh’ that might pick up Elijah or Ezekiel and deposit him elsewhere (1 Kgs 18:12; Ezek. 3:14). And I suspect that, in each case, these stories of Elijah and Elisha were influenced by the corresponding themes from Ezekiel.

TAKING LEAVE OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY

The Wisdom of Ben Sirach was mentioned above in our discussion of the Twelve. Ben Sirach is part of the longer Christian biblical canon, though it is not part of the Jewish collection of books that ‘defile the hands’. [Chapters 48–9](#) offer us one brief second century BCE overview of prophecy. Elijah receives the fullest treatment of all: a substantial resumé of his career (48:1–9), mention of his coming role ‘at the appointed time’ (48:10), and a concluding beatitude (48:11). The Elisha chapters in 2 Kings are summarized much more briefly (vv. 12–14), but no less gloriously:

When Elijah was enveloped in the whirlwind,
Elisha was filled with his spirit.
He performed twice as many signs,
and marvels with every utterance of his mouth.
Never in his lifetime did he tremble before any ruler,
not could anyone intimidate him at all.
Nothing was too hard for him,
and when he was dead his body prophesied.
In his life he did wonders,
and in death his deeds were marvellous. (NRSV)

Isaiah is mentioned in the context of King Hezekiah, who followed in David’s footsteps

as he was commanded by the prophet Isaiah,
who was great and trustworthy in his visions.
In Isaiah’s days the sun went backwards,
and he prolonged the life of the king.
By his dauntless spirit he saw the future,
and comforted the mourners in Zion.
He revealed what was to occur to the end of time,
and the hidden things before they happened. (48:22b–25)

Significantly, it is the role of Elisha's corpse in the restoring of the body thrown on to it that draws the first mention in this chapter of the word 'prophesy'. And, just after 'the prophet' Isaiah is named, there is mention of the sun going backwards.

The others are despatched in a couple of lines each (49:7–10), starting with Jeremiah:

For they had maltreated him,
who even in the womb had been consecrated a prophet,
To pluck up and ruin and destroy,
and likewise to build and to plant.
It was Ezekiel who saw the vision of glory,
which he showed him above the chariot of the cherubim.
For he also mentioned Job who held fast to all the ways of justice.
May the bones of the Twelve Prophets
send forth new life from where they lie,
For they comforted the people of Jacob
and delivered them with confident hope. (NRSV)

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Twelve are all called 'prophets'. New life from the bones of the Twelve, coming just after mention of Ezekiel, reminds us of his prophecy to the dry bones in the valley (Ezek. 37). But it is more likely that the Twelve are being wished *post mortem* success on a par with Elisha. And the mention of Job in connection with Ezekiel is a useful reminder that at Qumran Job and Psalms may have been counted among the Prophets, and that commentators in different ages have found Job, with its persistent critique of accepted wisdom and vision, the most subversively 'prophetic' of all biblical books (memorably, among recent authors, Fishbane 1989: 128–33).

Ben Sirach and many readers since may have overemphasized the role of 'wonders' among the prophets. But judgment, justice, and openness to the future are certainly among their key recurring themes. Wonders do belong to the stories: of Elijah and Elisha, of Isaiah and the deliverance of Jerusalem, of Jonah – and of exotic Ezekiel. And yet we cannot take our leave of the genre of biblical prophecy by simply talking in summary terms about the 'what'; for the 'how' is equally important.

Where prophets speak in the narratives of Samuel–Kings and Chronicles, and equally in the narratives within Jeremiah, Jonah, or Isaiah, they ordinarily speak prose. Yet much of the material in the prophetic books is poetry; and it is also likely that most of the earlier material within the prophetic books is contained in their poetical sections. However, the books themselves provide remarkably little indication of the original historical or social locations of the performance of this poetry. The collection of the poetry in these books has abstracted it from its original contexts. We may be right to discern anti-royal and anti-establishment protest in the pre-exilic kernels of some of these poetic collections. It may be just because this is so that much of the material is carefully ambiguous: 'house of Israel' could refer to court or people as a whole; and the same Hebrew can be translated 'the one enthroned in Jerusalem' or 'the one who inhabits Jerusalem'. (For a fuller discussion, see Auld

1989: 203–26, esp. 210–14.) An unambiguous court critic can quickly become a former critic (2 Chron. 25:14–16).

Ezekiel does draw attention to one aspect of the issue (33:32): ‘Don’t you see that to them you are a love song – beautiful voice and fine playing? They’ll hear your words, but will not be doing them.’ His comment seems to regret that the medium, far from being the message, is actually obscuring the message. Certainly, relatively little formal poetry has been preserved in that long book outside the chapters against foreign nations (25–32). The exceptions are found in [chapters 7, 15, 17, 19, 21, and 24](#); and in some of these cases their exceptional status is highlighted. Ezekiel 17:1–10 are the propounding of a ‘riddle’ or ‘parable’; and Ezekiel 19 is a ‘lamentation’. The introduction to Ezekiel 24:3b–13 both calls the poem against the ‘bloody city’ of Jerusalem a ‘likeness’ (*masbal*) and dates its occasion precisely to the start of the siege by the king of Babylon (24:2–3a).

The three chapters of the book of Numbers (22–4), which report the vain attempt of a king of Moab to curse Israel on its way to its promised land, offer a final perspective on this discussion. The first and longest chapter sets the scene in prose, and includes the well-known episode of the donkey which not only saw Yahweh’s angel long before Balaam’s eyes were opened to see it, but was able to talk to his master. The next chapters report Balaam’s inspired responses that evade Balak’s commission. The first is in Numbers 23:7b–10; and its introduction is typical.

Then God met Balaam; and Balaam said to him, ‘I have arranged the seven altars, and have offered a bull and a ram on each altar.’ Yahweh put a word in Balaam’s mouth, and said, ‘Return to Balak, and this is what you must say.’ So he returned to Balak, who was standing beside his burnt-offerings with all the officials of Moab. Then Balaam uttered his oracle/‘likeness’ (*masbal*), saying . . .

(23:4–7a NRSV, adapted)

‘*Masbal*’ is sometimes used to designate a didactic poem (Ps. 78, for example), a poem that uses appropriate comparisons (and contrasts) to ‘tell it how it is’ – and, in this case, explain ‘How can I curse whom God has not cursed?’ (23:8) Each of Balak’s three invitations to curse issues in a *masbal* in which Balaam’s words become more explicit in promise of blessing for Israel. When Balak then dismisses the ‘seer’, Balaam promises him future rule by Israel over (Balak’s own people of) Moab and over Edom as well. Words hostile to Amalek and the Kenites are attached rather loosely to the end. Assyria will capture the Kenites, but will fall to a seaborne force (24:24).

The stories of Balaam offer an explanatory perspective, and they are a likeness. When Balak requires to curse a neighbouring but foreign people, he hires a ‘seer’ who performs the task in formal poetry; and we recall Jeremiah, prophet to the nations, and Ezekiel the singer. However, well beyond those comparisons, these chapters in Numbers, taken as a whole, function as something of a *masbal* – a ‘likeness-that-explains’ – for biblical prophetic literature as a whole. Their poetry is a gift and burden from above, its message unwelcome to the ruler who must tolerate hearing it; its hope for Israel still to be realized, and implying bane for age-old hostile neighbours, not least Moab (cf. Isa. 15–16 and Jer. 48). We might be tempted

to add ‘only a likeness’ and remark that Balaam is not from the people of Israel, until we remember that Ezekiel was regularly addressed by God as ‘son of man/Adam’: as a ‘human’ or ‘mortal’ with a *masbal* from above to communicate to Israel. That prophetic *masbal*, which both explores and explains ‘the ways of God to man’, has proved to be a vital stimulus to the whole enterprise of theology.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

WISDOM



Katharine Dell

There is a distinct genre of material in the Bible known as ‘wisdom’. This is largely contained in the corpus of Old Testament and Apocryphal literature known as the ‘wisdom literature’, notably Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus (or Ben Sira) and the Wisdom of Solomon, but extends further than simply these texts. Its influence is felt in the New Testament in the presentation of Jesus both as a wise teacher and as a divine mediator. Any text that contains the genres of wisdom may be seen to be part of a broad wisdom tradition that extends beyond Israel into the ancient Near East. In fact the wisdom tradition is thought to have sprung largely from contact with the wisdom of other nations rather than from within Israelite tradition itself, because it does not mention the saving events of the history of Israel. Rather it is concerned with the human condition in general, with relationships between individuals and between individuals and God. Again, by analogy with the ancient Near East, notably Egypt, the wisdom tradition is thought to have been the product of circles of wise men or sages who perpetuated this material mainly in educational contexts.

PROVERBS

The basic form of wisdom is the proverb and hence our starting point for looking at the wisdom tradition is the book of Proverbs. This book divides into distinct sections and the oldest section of basic maxims is Proverbs 10:1 – 22:16. This section is headed ‘The proverbs of Solomon’ who has the reputation of being the ‘wise man’ *par excellence* from whom the wisdom tradition takes its inspiration. We find in this section a succession of proverbs beginning with ‘A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother’ (Prov. 10:1).¹ This proverb involves a comparison between the wise and the foolish, a theme that pervades the wisdom literature – the study of wisdom has as its goal ‘becoming wise’ and hence the basic idea is to present a whole series of maxims that will aid the would-be wise person to tread the path of wisdom. The proverbs cover a whole range of themes such as the dangers of laziness and the importance of hard work, the desirability of love rather than hatred, the important place of money and its corresponding dangers, the importance of careful choice of words rather than babbling like a fool, the place of

kindness and generosity and the key importance of a good reputation. They speak of fair dealing, the dangers of gossip, humility versus pride, hope rather than despair. The proverbs are full of observations about human nature, 'Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad' (Prov. 12:25). Some draw comparisons from the natural world to illuminate human behaviour, 'Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly' (Prov. 17:12); 'Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give' (Prov. 25:14, RSV adapted). The proverbs gather data about human nature that eventually form patterns that can be relied upon and built up as a picture of an ordered world that makes sense. However this does not mean that there is no ambiguity in events, even clear contradictions, and the proverbs make allowance for that. An example can be found among the proverbs on speech and communication – one proverb sees silence as a virtue and too much talk as a negative thing – 'He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.' And in the next breath the proverb goes on to say that 'Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent' (Prov. 17:27–8), suggesting that the silent can just as well be wise as a fool – one never knows until they open their mouths!

The proverbs are particularly concerned about punishment and reward – to the wicked, the fool, the sluggard or the evildoer punishment will come. Conversely to the wise, the upright, the hard-worker and the diligent, rewards will be great. In this sense there is a simplistic and rather naive attitude to life. It is very simple – you can choose one path or another, the path of wisdom that is smooth and straight and leads to all good things, or the path to folly, full of pitfalls and covered with thorns. There are material rewards attached to these two paths – wealth is the result of wisdom; poverty comes to the unsuspecting fool. For example, 'A man of crooked mind does not prosper, and one with a perverse tongue falls into calamity' (Prov. 17:20). While there is a recognition that the wicked do sometimes prosper, this is seen as a fleeting thing; for example Proverbs 11:18, 'A wicked man earns deceptive wages, but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward.' The rewards are not only monetary; they are happiness, fulfilment, longevity, family and friends. There is a great confidence in the wisdom quest and in the doctrine of retribution that, as we shall see, was not shared by authors of some of the more questioning wisdom books.

The question is raised, when and where did this proverbial material originate and in what kinds of circles was it transmitted? Those proverbs cited so far are all of a general nature, representing sound common sense and sometimes a profound insight into human nature. These have the character of folk wisdom, of the experience of many generations distilled into pithy sayings. They may be quite old in origin, reflecting a tradition that was once oral and that took place within families and tribes and wherever teaching was needed.² It is unlikely that these proverbs originated with Solomon but he may have had an interest in wisdom (as strongly suggested by 1 Kings 4:29–34), which led to clever sayings being associated with him.

There are a number of backgrounds reflected by the proverbs. This section seems to address those for whom slothfulness and poverty are real dangers. The people



Figure 7.1 Solomon dictates the Proverbs. Roy 15 D111 f.285, Bible Historiale (1357). British Library. Photo Bridgeman Art Library.

addressed by the proverbs need to work for their living and make their way in a society made up of both the righteous and evildoers. Making money is seen to be a good thing, but excessive wealth is criticized, particularly wealth quickly gained, ‘Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle, but he who gathers little by little will increase it’ (Prov. 13:11). There are proverbs about the king that have led some to believe that these proverbs are the work of courtiers or administrators in royal service,³ for example, ‘Inspired decisions are on the lips of a king; his mouth does not sin in judgment’ (Prov. 16:10). However, these proverbs about the king are of a general nature that does not preclude a broader context of discussion about the king by others than those in close contact with him.⁴

We need to distinguish between the origin of the proverbs and when they were written down. This section of Proverbs, it has been argued, may well have been intended as a kind of manual for would-be administrators of the Solomonic state.⁵ The actual writing down of wisdom, even if it had a folk origin, would have been a literary enterprise, only able to be done by intellectuals who could read and write and had the leisure for reflection of this nature and literary activity of this kind. So the idea was posited that the writing down of the proverbs could be attributed to a small group of educated sages, such as might have clustered around the king and his court. At the time of Solomon with the growth of the state, the need for educated administrators would have been great and these texts may well have been part of the curriculum of schools specially set up to train such men.⁶ This idea was largely based on the Egyptian model of schools known to have existed for the training of courtiers. Scholars were convinced of this theory even more strongly when close parallels were noted between another proverbial section of Proverbs

22:16 – 24:22 and the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope, which was known to be a school textbook.⁷

On this model of the development of the wisdom enterprise, the character of wisdom is revealed as essentially humanistic, concerned with understanding human nature and society and attempting to impose some kind of moral order on the world. It has been seen as a ‘secular’ quest by comparison with the rest of the Bible, which starts from divine revelation in history rather than from the human side.⁸ However, God is not absent. In Proverbs 10:1 – 22:16 we find odd clusters of proverbs that acknowledge that real understanding is to be found only with God. In [chapter 16](#) for example,

The plans of the mind belong to man,
but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.
All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the spirit.
Commit your work to the LORD,
and your plans will be established.
The LORD has made everything for its purpose,
even the wicked for the day of trouble. (vv. 1–4)

Even in the earliest wisdom tradition God is at the limits of human understanding and ‘The fear of the LORD prolongs life’ (Prov. 10:27).

When we move on to consider Proverbs 1–9 we find a more explicitly theological section that is often thought to be later and a development from the more humanistic quest.⁹ However, we can also regard it as simply drawing out the theological implications of essentially the same quest. The section contains a number of ‘instructions’ from father and mother to son, longer exhortations than just the simple maxim, which resemble Egyptian models and again suggest an educational context. However it is unlikely that the references to father, mother and son represent teacher and pupil here; rather they probably indicate a family context (maybe even a scribal/intellectual family) rather than a formal school one.¹⁰ Here the teaching is concerned with trusting God and finding favour with God by pursuing wisdom:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths. (Prov. 3:5–6).

In this section wisdom takes on more profound dimensions. God is seen to have founded the world by wisdom and wisdom, personified as a woman, calls to young men to follow her way. Wisdom has a character of her own and is portrayed as standing beside the city gates trying to win the young to her way (Prov. 1:20–1). Of course there are always the attractions of the foreign or loose woman who also seeks to entice the same innocents along her path (Prov. 7). However, woman wisdom is God’s wisdom, created at the beginning of time, the mediator of creation itself:



Figure 7.2 Statue of Sophia at Ephesus. Photo K. J. Dell.

When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth;
before he had made the earth with its fields,
or the first of the dust of the world . . .
then I was beside him, like a master workman;
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always. (Prov. 8:24–6, 30)

In Proverbs 1–9 then we find that wisdom has its own theology – that of creation. The basic societal and human order established by the proverbs and maxims of 10:1–22:16 are brought on to a more profound level in being seen to reflect the order of the world itself. There are Egyptian parallels again with the figure of Ma-at, the principle of order.¹¹ God stands at the heart of that order – much can be known by humans but ultimately it is God who holds the keys to wisdom. Conversely God mediates wisdom through creation itself and through the figure of wisdom who calls to those who wish to be wise to follow her path (Prov. 8). We might ask about the origin of this more profound theological reflection about wisdom. It certainly does not look like the kind of material used for training administrators; rather it is more religiously orientated and may belong in groups undertaking religious training – in temple schools for example.¹²

There are other smaller collections of material in Proverbs that seem to have originated in different groups of the wise.¹³ In Proverbs 25:1 we are told that this collection of proverbs (to ch. 29) was compiled by the ‘men of Hezekiah’. This has suggested to some that the writing up of many proverbs may belong to such a group based around the king, but Hezekiah rather than Solomon.¹⁴ It is interesting that these ‘men’ would have belonged to the eighth century BC, nearly two centuries after Solomon. This might suggest that the actual literary transmission of the proverbs was beginning to take shape at this slightly later time in educated circles rather than at the earlier Solomonic period. The idea of a royal administration and intellectual enlightenment on a large scale at the time of Solomon has in fact largely fallen from favour in scholarly circles in recent years.¹⁵ Rather, it is argued that this was a relatively small state that would have needed its intellectuals who may indeed have gathered together some wisdom from broader contexts and assembled it in literary form, but not on the large scale proposed by those advocating this theory nor as a part of formalized educational activity.¹⁶ We should maybe speak of clusters of literary formulation of proverbs occurring at different times rather than trying to pinpoint specific contexts in which the preservation of wisdom sayings was undertaken.

We have no firm archaeological evidence for the existence of schools along Egyptian lines, but what we do have is a large number of inscriptions and evidence of fairly widespread literacy from the eighth century BC onwards.¹⁷ This might suggest that a once-oral wisdom tradition gradually flowered as a literary activity in narrower, more intellectual circles and found its home ultimately in interaction with the more profound theological reflection of Proverbs 1–9. This theological aspect would have formed part of the concerns of the intellectuals who cast the material in more literary form, individuals who are perhaps to be associated with more religious or priestly circles such as might have existed in a temple school rather than seen as a separate group of sages with concerns isolated from other areas of Israelite life. This theological dimension is what was to be taken up in its later biblical literature, in the books of Job and Ecclesiastes to which we shall now turn.

JOB

The book of Job is generally thought to be later than Proverbs, reflecting a period when the easy answers of the earlier wisdom writers no longer worked for those

undergoing more profound experiences of suffering. It is probably to be dated between the sixth and fourth centuries BC – a cross-reference can be found to the person of Job in Ezekiel 14:14, 20, which speaks of a righteous figure who probably existed in folk memory and whose existence no doubt predates the book that may more naturally fit the later date. The reference to ‘the Satan’ in the prologue of Job is often seen to suggest a date for the whole book in the Persian period, although some argue that these are a later addition.¹⁸ Proverbs was optimistic about the fact that good things come to the wise person and that punishment is inevitable for the wicked. The early maxims encourage one to walk along wisdom’s path and all will be well. The more theological approach advocated especially in Proverbs 1–9 is to fear God and trust in his Wisdom and then good things will come to you. The author of the book of Job realized that life was not that simple. Real experience revealed that suffering often came, violently and unexpectedly, to the righteous man who had done all in his power to follow the path of wisdom. How was this to be understood? Did it not simply reveal that the wisdom quest was bankrupt?

The author of the book of Job, who probably lived after the Exile when many earlier certainties had been overturned, is thought to have taken an earlier tale about a righteous man named Job who, despite calamity, held on to his integrity.¹⁹ When all was taken away from him his response was ‘Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil’ (Job 2:10). The first two chapters of the book are in the prose of this tale, and then at [chapter 3](#) we have a lament by Job followed by a long dialogue between Job and three friends who have purportedly come to console him. This debate concerns the question whether or not Job is suffering because he has sinned. Job maintains throughout that he is innocent and so does not deserve the suffering that has come to him. He argues that God has turned against him and ‘the arrows of the Almighty’ (Job 6:4) are in him, while the friends are convinced that Job has sinned. The dialogue contains three rounds of speeches in [chapters 4–14](#), [15–21](#) and [22–27](#) and becomes more and more heated with open criticism on both sides. The third cycle of speeches has been dislocated and characters appear to be saying the wrong things. This is probably the result of scribal error in transmission and many reorderings of the speeches have been suggested.²⁰

The dialogue section is thought to be the main composition of the author who used the story of Job to create a more profound response to the problem of innocent suffering and to the issue of how to maintain a relationship with God in the light of such suffering.²¹ The folk tale airs the issue of motivation for fearing God. Is it simply a matter of believing in God because of the benefits one can gain (an attitude promoted by the strictly retributive reasoning of proverbs) or is there a more profound relationship than that? It becomes apparent in Job that his relationship with God is more profound and that he is prepared to accept God’s punishment if he feels it is deserved. The problem is that he does not feel that it is. The friends act as a foil for the traditional view that the doctrine of retribution does work and that if you are suffering you must have sinned in some way. Job moves beyond such sentiments into a profound questioning of the whole ground of his relationship with God, notably of God’s justice. Using legal-type language he tries to force God into the dock to explain himself.²² The problem is that God is both judge and prosecutor. Job calls for a mediator to judge between himself and God ([ch. 19](#)), but of

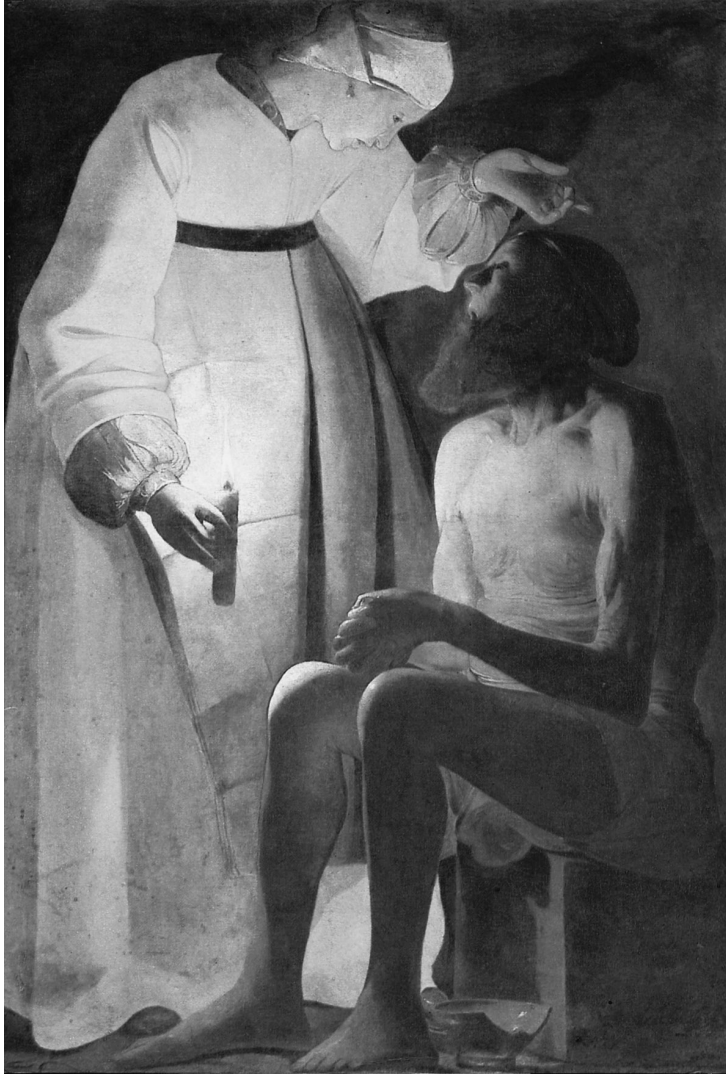


Figure 7.3 Job visited by his wife. Photograph courtesy Musée départemental d'Art ancien et contemporain collection, Epinal, France.

course that is an impossibility. Finally, God does appear ([ch. 38](#)), not to answer his questions directly, but rather to point out to him that there are many things in the created world that human beings do not understand. Why does Job presume to understand his own situation or the reasons for God's action? At this point Job repents and confesses to having uttered 'counsel without knowledge' (42:3), a gesture that, for many, spoils the tragic character of the book so far.²³ However in an interesting verse in Job 42:7 God states that the friends were wrong in their words about God and that Job was right – a surprising statement in the light of Job's vehement

remarks in his speeches in the dialogue. Job is then asked by God to intercede for the friends by praying on their behalf. Job is thus vindicated by God before his restoration in the epilogue that follows.

The book of Job is very unlike the book of Proverbs in that it contains few maxims and it has its own dialogue genre. At times it more closely resembles the psalms of lament, especially in [chapters 3](#) and [29–31](#), Job's closing lament, and in fact the book's dialogue section is full of psalmic sentiments turned on their head by the author as he attempts to express Job's anguish and protest at his treatment by God. This represents a parodying of a known tradition, which the author's audience would have understood.²⁴ There is the same view of God as creator that we find in Proverbs but here it is much expanded. In a section of speeches by God at the end of the book, God reveals himself as the creator who does great things that no one can understand (Job 38–41). As an answer to the problem of suffering, this reply by God seems curiously both to negate and confirm the wisdom quest. The optimism that human beings can understand and to some extent control their own destiny by 'wise' behaviour is overturned, but in its place is an acknowledgement of the greatness and otherness of God whose ways are beyond comprehension. He is indeed at the limits of the wisdom quest and he does things for his own reasons rather than any that human beings can understand. This confirms therefore that trusting in God is all one can do, but it makes the attempt to understand even more frustrating.

The dialogue between Job and the friends reveals a man whose presuppositions have been challenged, a man battling against those who think that they know all the answers. The debate concerns Job's righteousness. Job knows that he has not sinned and that he therefore does not deserve the suffering that has come to him – the destruction of his property, his children and the affliction with a festering disease. The friends generally maintain that he must have sinned or else he would not have received this treatment at the hand of God. At a later stage in the book, in [chapters 32–7](#), a fourth friend appears and confirms these views, while indicating that indeed, as God is about to reveal in his speeches, God's ways are mysterious. These speeches are often thought to be additions to the book²⁵ as is a hymn to wisdom in [chapter 28](#), which speaks of the impossibility of finding wisdom on earth.²⁶ The hymn ends with a sentiment that links together divine wisdom and human wisdom, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding' (Job 28:28). The book of Job closes with the restoration of Job to former prosperity, which seems to contradict all that has gone before in that Job has just disproved the fair working of the doctrine of retribution in his speeches in the dialogue. But here we are back in the folk tale of the original story and in its present position it is best understood as an ironic ending to the book.

It is hard to know what the context of this work might have been. It seems to come from circles concerned to criticize the earlier certainties of wisdom, maybe from a person or group sceptical of earlier wisdom and wishing to express this in literary form.²⁷ The book of Job belongs less obviously to an educational context, resembling more closely a kind of paradigmatic tale, and it has been questioned whether, on a narrow level of definition that takes its starting point from the character and contexts of the book of Proverbs, it can really be regarded as wisdom at all.²⁸



Figure 7.4 Statue of Job from outside Yad Vashem. Photo Nathan Meron.

ECCLESIASTES

The book of Ecclesiastes is often coupled with the book of Job since they both represent wisdom in revolt. However, in many ways Ecclesiastes springs from the same aphoristic style of quest as Proverbs and has more in common with this book. Here we have the musings of an individual, named Qoheleth or ‘the Preacher’, which belong fairly naturally to an instructional or educational milieu (Eccl. 1:2:9). The book is thought to date before the Greek period, which began in the third century BC, since it does not demonstrate the influence of Greek ideas (although some have argued for their presence).²⁹ The author of Ecclesiastes uses a special method of testing maxims and providing commentary upon them.³⁰ This is interspersed with poems on times and seasons, and one in [chapter 12](#) on old age, and repeated and characteristic phrases such as ‘All is vanity and a striving after wind’ (1:14). The word *hebel*, ‘vanity’, is used thirty-eight times in the book and is a kind of keyword in the light of which all things are relativized. The book is generally thought to be pessimistic in tone, although some scholars have stressed its more optimistic aspects.³¹ The author certainly advocates enjoying life while we can, ‘There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God’ (Eccl. 2:24). However this is often tempered

by the recognition that all actions are relativized by death, the great leveller (e.g. Eccl. 2:16–18). The book certainly ends on a more optimistic note (that many have seen as a later addition³²) that the best thing to do is to ‘Fear God and keep his commandments’ (12:13).

We find in the book a concealed attribution to Solomon – the preacher is described as ‘son of David, king in Jerusalem’ (1:1), as having ‘been king over Israel in Jerusalem’ (1:12) and there is a long ‘royal testament’ section in [chapter 2](#) in which the author seems to take on the persona of Solomon – ‘I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me’ (Eccl. 2:9). This attribution can hardly be taken literally knowing what we do about the dating of the book and is probably to be regarded as an attempt to give the book authority. However, it seems odd to conceal the reference to Solomon in this way and some have suggested that it represents clumsy editorial work rather than the work of the main author, Qoheleth.³³ This method maintains the royal link that seems to be a characteristic of much wisdom literature (although not Job, which does not contain an attribution to Solomon or treat royal concerns). This author seeks all means to pleasure but finds it an empty quest. He questions the point of working and of accumulating wealth, for death is all there is to look forward to, ‘As he came from his mother’s womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil, which he may carry away in his hand’ (Eccl. 5:15). He finds that there is nothing new and that nothing really changes, ‘Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh’ (Eccl. 12:12). He commends enjoyment and sees it as God-given but he questions whether human beings can really understand the mysteries of life. He speaks in his poem in [chapter 3](#) of times and seasons, ‘For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what it planted’ (3:1–2). These are God’s times, however, not ours – ‘He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man’s mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end’ (3:11).

The author of Ecclesiastes is thus working from within the wisdom tradition, testing its maxims against his experience and finally moving towards an acceptance of the *status quo*. His sentiments are anti-wisdom in the sense that they stress the futility of being able to know anything with certainty, and yet they confirm the God-given aspect of the wisdom quest in that trust in God is seen to be what is of lasting benefit. Human wisdom is ephemeral, but God’s wisdom endures. Human beings will never fully understand – all they can do is acknowledge the futility of life but trust in God all the same. There is a pessimism here that contrasts sharply with the optimism of the early wisdom writers but an accompanying realism and a trust in God that the early writings lacked. The author may have belonged to circles of the wise – and this book certainly has a high literary quality – but there is a theological aspect to it that may suggest a broader temple school type context rather than a more secular, educational one.

The consideration of these biblical wisdom books has revealed to us the character of the wisdom literature as starting from human experience but with a profound sense of interaction with the divine. The God of wisdom is the creator who creates

the universe and human beings within it, who gives the universe an order human beings can try to discover, who gives human beings the desire to know more and to understand their lives in relation to each other, to the world around them and to God. Yet it is that same God who withholds ultimate understanding from humans, understanding that can come only through communion with the divine that surpasses human reason.

WISDOM PSALMS

There are some psalms in the Psalter generally designated wisdom psalms, of which one is Psalm 73. In this psalm the author is worried about the lack of parity between the expected fate of the righteous and the apparent prosperity of the wicked. But then a profound turning point is reached in verse 17 when the psalmist enters the sanctuary and suddenly sees clearly that in fact the doctrine of retribution is at work after all. Something in the communion with God has made a difference to the psalmist's understanding, which suggests that 'fearing God' might be good advice after all. This psalm resembles the book of Job, the 'turning point' in particular echoing Job's repentance at the end of the book, which many scholars have found incomprehensible after the tirade, found in God's speeches, about God's ways being greater than human understanding. However, it is possible to understand Job's repentance as a moment of understanding as he is at last in contact with the divine, for which he has called during his speeches.³⁴ The worst torment for Job was feeling that God was not answering him, that he was absent, even hostile. Even though God does not answer his questions, there is something in the appearance of God that seems to satisfy Job. The stage is then set for the happy ending of the epilogue in which Job is restored with twice as many camels and other animals as he had before and a new set of children.

As with Psalm 73, other psalms are likened to wisdom on the basis of parallels with the known wisdom literature; for example Psalm 37 with its interest in the fates of the good and wicked is likened to Proverbs; Psalm 39 is likened to Ecclesiastes in its preoccupation with the vanity of life; and Psalm 49 is likened to Job and is mainly a lament and points to a close relationship between psalmic lament and parts of the wisdom literature. Also psalms concerned with creation, such as Psalm 104, can be ranged alongside the wisdom literature. There are problems however with classifying 'wisdom psalms' within the Psalter as a whole. Many psalms contain a few forms of wisdom or a little of its characteristic content but cannot overall be classified as wisdom; for example Psalm 111, which contains the wisdom motto that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom in verse 10 but which overall is not of the wisdom genre.³⁵

The wisdom psalms, if they are to be designated as a separate group,³⁶ are generally judged to be literary compositions, belonging to the post-exilic period rather than being liturgical texts used in Israelite worship from early times. Wisdom circles are seen by some scholars to have given the Psalter its final form, the sages being seen as those who shaped much of the literature of the Old Testament in its final stages.³⁷ The wisdom psalms have often been seen as non-cultic³⁸ but in fact there is no evidence for this and there may well have been a closer connection between religious observance and instruction than is often maintained (e.g. the writer of

Psalms 119, a long acrostic psalm, prayed to God seven times a day). We shall see this development into the realm of prayer in Ecclesiasticus. It is possible in my opinion that from earliest times the wisdom and worship of Israel found important points of contact, the psalms being in many ways a digest of other Old Testament traditions. Wisdom was part of the self-understanding of the people and thus it legitimately found expression in their cultic life just as all other areas of their life and history did.

WISDOM WITHIN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The wisdom literature has often been divided off from the rest of the Old Testament and given a somewhat poor press.³⁹ Its theology in particular has been difficult to integrate with the historically based religion of ancient Israel.⁴⁰ What is seen to have made Israel distinctive are the great events of Exodus and salvation history culminating in the covenant and the law. This led the Israelites to believe in one God rather than the many gods of other nations and it led them to evolve a distinctive religion that was not cyclical but was linear and temporal. However, this characterization is too simplified. It is clear that the historical revelation was not the full story. There was another mode of revelation through the everyday, through human experience of the world and of God. There was a recognition of God as creator as well as of God as redeemer and this tradition had a separate place in the literature of Israel. We can perhaps see the historical dimension as a horizontal line and the creation/cosmos/wisdom dimension as a vertical line.⁴¹ In cultic life the two lines meet with the praise of God as both creator and redeemer (e.g. Psalm 74). They also meet in prophecy – this link seems to have been of particular significance to the exiles since it is taken up in Deutero-Isaiah where a profound uniting of creation as the first act of the redeeming history is found.⁴² It also features in the Pentateuch in the Priestly account of creation in Genesis 1 in which creation stands at the head of the salvation history.

Wisdom then needs to be considered theologically as concerned with creation.⁴³ However, it is also concerned with justice, retribution, moral concerns, and as such links up with other Old Testament books such as Deuteronomy⁴⁴ and some of the prophets, notably Amos, Hosea and Isaiah.⁴⁵ We cannot call any of these books wisdom books but we can note an influence from a tradition that was clearly broad in its scope both in terms of its context and its theology. There are also links of wisdom with narratives – the J narrative in the Pentateuch, the Joseph narrative and the Succession Narrative have been particular contenders for having wisdom links.⁴⁶ Their high literary quality and their more anthropocentric starting point than other narratives have been seen as pointers in this direction. Some saw them as the product of the Solomonic Enlightenment, while others have been less persuaded by such a view and have simply seen them as the product of intellectual circles with close links with wisdom methods and ideology.⁴⁷

Wisdom then is necessarily seen as a separate genre so that we can identify it properly. However, we have seen that its influence pervades various areas of Israelite thought and that we are wrong to hive it off into its own stylistic and theological ghetto. Biblical wisdom however does retain a separate identity from those books

more concerned with relating and understanding historical events. This was set to change. We shall see in considering the two wisdom books of the Apocrypha how the distinctive wisdom tradition was brought into contact with Israelite salvation history, notably with the Torah as the true wisdom of God. However, before that we shall pause for a moment to look at wisdom in its broader ancient Near Eastern context.

WISDOM AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

This is a large topic that cannot be treated in any depth here.⁴⁸ However, it is clear that there was a broader tradition of wisdom with which Israel's wisdom links up. The great nations of Egypt and Mesopotamia needed wise men to service the state, to keep archives, and to advise the king. We have seen how many of the suggestions made about the context of Israelite wisdom have sprung from looking at such contextual parallels. The close parallel of Proverbs 22:16 – 24:22 with the Instruction of Amenemope from Egypt occasioned much speculation about a similar school context in Israel in which instructions may have been used.⁴⁹ However the precise period of those links are hard to ascertain – it may have been the Solomonic state that had the need for such formal educational processes to train administrators for the state, but current opinion states that this would be an overstatement of the size and nature of the state at that time.⁵⁰ Joseph stands out as an Israelite who became a wise man in the court of the Pharaoh, something possible in Egypt but not so likely in Israel. It is possible that under eighth to seventh century kings such as Hezekiah or Josiah there was more literary activity going on in general⁵¹ and hence more need for a trained group of intellectuals. We have evidence of more widespread literacy from the eighth century onwards.⁵² However, we have no hard evidence for schools themselves in Israel, only for a common literary tradition.

There are some interesting parallels to the book of Job among the ancient Near Eastern wisdom, notably *Ludlul bel Nemeqi* and the Babylonian Job.⁵³ These parallels show that there was a lamenting and questioning tradition in the ancient Near East that plumbed the depths of human experience. Parallels can also be found with Ecclesiastes such as the Dialogue with Pessimism.⁵⁴ There are important links between some of the creation imagery used in wisdom and in certain psalms and the ancient Near East, notably links with Canaanite sea monsters⁵⁵ and interesting parallels with Canaanite and Babylonian rituals in the cult.⁵⁶

One cannot therefore deny that Israelite wisdom is part of a broader ancient Near Eastern phenomenon. However, some of the parallels have perhaps been overstressed and wisdom too readily seen as the 'foreign element' in Old Testament thought in the light of such links. In fact much Old Testament thought can be related to ancient Near Eastern concepts and myths – wisdom is not a special case.⁵⁷ We can perhaps argue that the genre of wisdom forms an important bridge between the ancient Near Eastern world, with its nature/creation faith, and the religion of Israel, with its emphasis on God as creator and with its interest in universal human experience. But it also retains its own distinctive Israelite character as it developed according to the needs of a particular people.

ECCLESIASTICUS OR THE WISDOM OF JESUS, SON OF SIRACH

It is usually maintained that it is Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus, son of Sirach (abbreviated to Sirach in what follows) who first made the link between Wisdom and Torah and this is certainly true of the personified figure of wisdom whose teaching embodies the Torah. However, a suggestion has been made that in fact there were links between legal and wisdom circles before this, found in particular in the book of Deuteronomy, which features a number of wisdom motifs.⁵⁸ This might suggest that circles of the wise were found in close contact with other areas of life such as the temple and among those responsible for the literary formulation of texts. It has been argued furthermore that after the Exile we can more readily speak of a broader intellectual tradition in which the borders between groups such as prophets, priests and wise men are becoming more blurred anyway.⁵⁹ It is a natural step nevertheless for Sirach in the second century BC to equate following the paths of wisdom with following the Torah. Von Rad remarked that it was rather ironic that wisdom starts on the sidelines of Israelite tradition but, once equated with the Torah, it becomes central in Israelite thought.⁶⁰ To express it slightly differently, gradually wisdom traditions are becoming more integrated with more historical traditions, a process that may have started happening after the Exile with the integration of creation into the redemption history in the thought of Deutero-Isaiah.

It is from Sirach that we have a description of the work of the wise man and the need for leisure (Ecclus. 38:24 – 39:11, my trans.) – ‘How can a man become wise who guides the plough . . . and talks only about cattle?’ (38: 25). He describes the wise man as studying the law, past wisdom and prophecies as well as the sayings of famous men and the intricacies of parables. He is described as mixing with rulers and travelling abroad and is also a man of prayer. There is thus an interesting combination here of many traditions, which suggests that certainly in this period, and maybe earlier too, the wise should not be seen as completely separate from other groups and only as employed in a limited form of education or in the production of wisdom literature. This is probably too narrow an interpretation of their role, which may well have been diverse. Sirach is a named work and has a personal touch that earlier wisdom literature lacks. The author may have been a priest (he shows some interest in cultic life and sacrifice and he praises the High Priest) or some kind of temple scribe. The book suggests an educational function of some kind. It contains proverbial wisdom but usually with an accompanying interpretation in the manner of the author of Ecclesiastes (e.g. Ecclus. 33:14–15; 39:33–4). Sirach uses a style of exhortation that resembles prophecy and uses refrains for emphasis. He also uses poetry, hymn forms (especially hymns to wisdom) and prayers and so there is a real mix of genres in his work that stretches the boundaries of a narrow definition of wisdom.

For Sirach the fear of the Lord is at the centre of the wisdom quest. He is more positive than Ecclesiastes about the possibility of discovering God’s order and God’s time. There is the same tension that is found in all wisdom between the human quest for wisdom and its limitations and the divine mediation of wisdom. The emphasis in Sirach tends in the latter direction and the message is that the wise man can control his life if he is in a close religious relationship with God. At the

centre of the wisdom exercise is the keeping of the Torah. The foolish man is no longer just a sluggard or one who talks too much or one who fritters away his money. The foolish man is the one who defiantly ignores God's commandments, while the wise man follows them in upright manner. True wisdom is hidden in the Mosaic law and in the sacred history as the means of the revelation of that law so that both of these are integrated into the wisdom scheme. The nature of wisdom as a cosmic entity is stressed – wisdom is linked with creation but especially with the creation of the law. This had the effect of losing the universalism that characterized the earlier wisdom enterprise, making it more of a national product, pertinent to Israel alone. However, Sirach is not legalistic and has not lost the breadth of interest in all aspects of human life that characterized earlier proverbial material.

One of Sirach's techniques is to quote and allude to past texts, a technique that characterizes later works in general. For example he quotes from the primeval history in Genesis 1–11, retelling the biblical account of the creation fusing his own interpretation with traditional ideas (17:1–12). In verse 6, for example, he adds a note of wonder at the ability of the human intellect to differentiate between good and evil that is not contained in the Genesis account. Interestingly Sirach did not perceive himself as an innovator; on the contrary he was a preserver of past traditions and saw himself as merely making plain what was already inherent in earlier ideas. He always places the knowledge gained by experience in an explicitly theological context. Thus, for example, the idea of God's time, while seen in a negative light in Ecclesiastes because a person can never know the proper time, is seen as a positive thing since God has a time for everything in his overall purpose for humankind – it is better therefore not to question God but to trust in God. So Ecclesiasticus 39:33 states, 'The works of the Lord are all good and he will supply every need in his hour.' This is where predestination enters his thought, an idea that is in tension with the openness of the human pursuit of wisdom. Related to this idea is another motif in Sirach, his theory of opposites. According to this theory everything comes in pairs and everything has its opposite, and so there is a fixed place for all things. In 33:15 Sirach exclaims, 'Look upon the works of the Most High; they likewise are in pairs, one the opposite of the other.'

Thus with Sirach we find a wisdom that is beginning to change as it fuses with the historical traditions of Israel and as it becomes more overtly pious and God-centred. It is mixing with many other genres from Israelite life and becoming a less distinct phenomenon. This can also be seen to be the case in the Wisdom of Solomon, the final text that we shall look at here.

WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Turning to the Wisdom of Solomon, a first-century work thought to have been influenced by Greek ideas⁶¹ we find a wisdom book of a rather different character that again starts to strain our definition of what wisdom is. There are few proverbs here; rather wisdom has become knowledge of cosmic secrets. The divine revelation dimension has taken over from the human quest for knowledge. There is an emphasis on God – his mercy, his foreknowledge, his forbearance in delaying punishments (which leads some to question whether God is maintaining justice in the world) and his

will for humankind. The correct human response is one of piety and virtuous living that includes full faith in God. There can be no rewards for good behaviour without faith in God, a departure from earlier wisdom thought. There are warnings and admonitions in prophetic style in criticism of lifestyles of which the author disapproves (1:16 – 2:24) and there are frightening descriptions of the terrors that await the ungodly. Good and evil are very real forces linked with creative wisdom on the one hand and the frail human spirit on the other. Prayers and psalms feature, as in Sirach, and there are passages of lyrical poetry and pedestrian prose. Historical concerns are merged with wisdom elements and religious concerns, such as the election of the chosen people and polemic against idols, feature prominently. There is a new emphasis on the elect to whom alone full knowledge is available since it is only they who follow the God of Israel. This starts to link up with apocalyptic ideas which stress that the revelation of hidden secrets is reserved for a chosen few. However, there is a tension in this writer's thought in that he wishes to confirm that all the righteous can know God.

The hymn to wisdom forms an important link with earlier wisdom. Here Wisdom is not only personified as a woman; it is hypostatized so that wisdom becomes a manifestation of the divine, an emanation of divine attributes. Wisdom of Solomon 7:22 reads 'for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me. For in her there is a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible'. She is the orderer and creator of all things (8:1, 6) as well as the teacher of virtues such as self-control and justice (8:7) and the supplier of all instruction (7:17–22) including information on branches of the natural sciences, which are enumerated.

This work is attributed to Solomon and yet it is from a period much later than the time of Solomon – probably the first century BC. On grounds of chronology alone it could not therefore have been written by him. It was probably attributed to Solomon, as the symbol of the greatest wisdom thinker, to add more weight to the content of the book. It does however have a wider religious context than just a wisdom one with interests in prophecy in particular, and shows tendencies that indicate that the people of God are now an oppressed minority, a vassal state of succeeding great empires. We can just about include it as wisdom literature but with the awareness that wisdom is becoming less and less of a distinctive phenomenon and is more and more to be seen in conjunction both with influences from other areas of Israelite life and also from outside Israelite culture.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND WISDOM

Wisdom influence can be found in parts of the New Testament. A number of sayings of Jesus in the gospels can be likened to forms familiar from wisdom literature, notably material traditionally attributed to Q, which may have been a separate sayings source.⁶² The question is raised how far Jesus himself spoke in the tradition of wisdom or how far the tradition that preserved what he said modelled the sayings on wisdom genres. It is possible that in the light of the postponement of the second coming or end time a fresh emphasis was placed on leading an ethical life in the present and hence that the ongoing Christian tradition stressed the practical wisdom

elements in the Jesus tradition. Jesus' parables resemble the teaching style of the wisdom writers but in fact are subtly different to wisdom genres, suggesting that while he worked within a known tradition he nevertheless branched outside that tradition to express something new. There is also an important relationship between Jesus and personified wisdom, notably in the logos hymn in John's gospel (ch. 1), which can be seen to follow closely the pattern of earlier hymns to wisdom as found in Proverbs 8, Sirach 24 and Wisdom of Solomon 7:22ff. It is interesting that the language of pre-existent wisdom, alongside God at the creation of the world and forming the crucial bridge between God and humankind, was taken up and used to refer to Christ. The effect is to create a profound statement about the complex divinity/humanity question in reference to Christ. There is also debate regarding the influence of wisdom on Paul, instigated by Hans Conzelmann⁶³ who saw Paul as a teacher of wisdom and then draws conclusions as to Paul's method in dealing with speculative wisdom traditions after studying 1 Corinthians 1:10 – 4:21, the only passage in Paul's letters that deals systematically with the theme of wisdom. We also find hymns about Jesus as pre-existent in Colossians and Philippians. Wisdom influence is commonly found in the epistle of James, which consists of sayings and exhortations and can be likened to Q.⁶⁴ The question is raised, is Jesus to be regarded as a sage in any technical sense, or are we better off regarding him as a wise person whose wisdom can be ranked alongside that of any sage but who transcends the category in his cosmological role? It is interesting that he combines in his person the anthropological and the cosmological, the two aspects of wisdom that are seen, particularly in biblical wisdom and most notably in the figure of personified wisdom, to be in tension.⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

Wisdom then is a diverse phenomenon that has a distinctive character of its own and yet forges important links with other Old Testament literature and with the ancient Near East. Its influence extends throughout the biblical period and it changes and develops over time as contexts change and as theological thought develops. One of the main changes is from the universal, human-oriented quest for understanding that characterizes the canonical wisdom books, to the all-pervading theological scheme that it becomes in the work of later writers. Finally, its biblical role culminates in an important contribution to understanding the role and the nature of Jesus as pre-existent wisdom, 'in the beginning with God' (John 1:1).

NOTES

- 1 Unless stated otherwise, all Bible quotes are from the RSV.
- 2 See recent discussion of the oral beginnings of wisdom in C. Westermann, *The Roots of Wisdom*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1995 (ET of *Wurzeln der Weisheit*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990).
- 3 Argued for mainly on the strength of Egyptian parallels by W. L. Humphreys, 'The Motif of the Wise Courtier in the Book of Proverbs', in J. Gammie (ed.), *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Studies in Honor of Samuel Terrien*, Missoula, Scholars Press, 1978, 177–90. See

- also more recently M. Fox, 'The Social Location of the Book of Proverbs', in M. Fox et al. (eds), *Texts, Temples and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*, Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1996, 227–39.
- 4 See discussion in K. J. Dell, 'The King in the Wisdom Literature', in J. Day (ed.), *King and Messiah in the Old Testament and Related Literature: Papers from the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, JSOTSup. Sheffield, 1998. See also R. N. Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1990, who argues that the majority of royal proverbs do not imply that the speaker was closely associated with the king, and F. W. Golka, *The Leopard's Spots: Biblical and African Wisdom in Proverbs*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1993, who reaches a similar conclusion in the light of African parallels.
 - 5 This was propounded most fully by E. W. Heaton, *Solomon's New Men*, London, Pica Press, 1974, who argued for the growth of an administrative class in Israel to service Solomon's state.
 - 6 E.g. A. Lemaire, *Les Écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l'ancien Israël*, Fribourg, Universitätsverlag; Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981.
 - 7 A view first put forward by A. Erman, 'Eine ägyptische Quelle der Sprüche Salamos', *Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-hist. Kl. 15, Berlin, 1924, 86–93; and challenged recently by R. N. Whybray, 'The Structure and Composition of Proverbs 22:17–24:22', in S. E. Porter, P. Joyce and D. E. Orton (eds), *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1994.
 - 8 An approach taken by, e.g., W. McKane, *Proverbs*, London, SCM Press, 1970.
 - 9 Many scholars have assumed the lateness of Proverbs 1–9, including R. N. Whybray in his early work on Proverbs – see *Wisdom in Proverbs*, London, SCM Press, 1965. In his later work Whybray (in *Proverbs*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans; London, Marshall Pickering, 1994) modified his opinion that there is a systematic 'Yahwehizing' redaction in Proverbs 1–9, although he still argued for its lateness.
 - 10 Argued, e.g., by C. Westermann, op. cit.
 - 11 See H. Gese, *Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit*, Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr, 1958. This idea was developed further by H. H. Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit als Weltordnung*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 40, Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr, 1968.
 - 12 This idea has been expressed by P. Doll, *Menschenschöpfung und Weltschöpfung in der alttestamentlichen Weisheit*, Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1985, mainly in relation to post-exilic wisdom circles.
 - 13 R. N. Whybray in *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1994, stressed the importance of considering each section of the book of Proverbs separately.
 - 14 R. B. Y. Scott, 'Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel', in M. Noth and D. Winton-Thomas (eds), *Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, VTSup 3, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1955, 262–79 argues that the Solomonic fiction was deliberately played up by Hezekiah and the wisdom that flourished then.
 - 15 S. Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, Oxford, OUP, 1994.
 - 16 L. L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel*, Valley Forge, Trinity Press International, 1995.
 - 17 See discussion in G. I. Davies, 'Were There Schools in Ancient Israel?' in J. Day, R. P. Gordon and H. G. M. Williamson (eds), *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton*, Cambridge, CUP, 1995, 199–211.
 - 18 See L. W. Batten, 'The Epilogue to the Book of Job', *AThR* 15 (1933), 125–128.
 - 19 There is general agreement by scholars over this, although it has been suggested that the dialogue is earlier and that the prose framework was put around it or, of course, that the whole was composed at one sitting. These alternative views however do not, in my opinion, adequately explain the contradictions between prose section and dialogue section.
 - 20 It is a commonly held view that the dislocation of the third cycle is due to scribal error, since there is no third cycle speech by Zophar and only a very truncated one by Bildad; and Job seems to be saying what would belong more naturally in the mouths of these friends. A usual reconstruction would attribute 24:18–25 and 27:13–23 to Zophar, and 26:5–14 to Bildad.

- 21 The main author may have been drawing on his own experience of suffering here. It is likely that he saw in the prose tale an opportunity for making a more profound statement about human reactions to suffering than the patient response of Job in the prologue allowed.
- 22 H. Richter, *Studien zu Hiob*, Theologische Arbeiten 11, Berlin, Evangelische Verlaganstalt 1959, writes, 'The all-pervasive basis of the drama of Job are the genres taken from law' (ET 131).
- 23 Job has been likened to Greek tragedy by a number of scholars including, J. J. Slotki, 'The Origin of the Book of Job', *ExpTim* 39 (1927–28), 131–5; and W. A. Irwin, 'Job and Prometheus', *JR* 30 (1950), 90–108, who suggests literary dependence between Job and Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*. At the other extreme W. Whedbee, 'The Comedy of Job', *Semeia* 7 (*Studies in the Book of Job*, eds R. Polzin and D. Robertson), Missoula, Scholars Press 1977, 1–39, has likened Job to a black comedy. These genre classifications while often shedding light on the content of Job are not generally seen as satisfactory overall and actual literary dependence on a particular Greek tragedy is highly unlikely. Job is generally seen to have failed as a tragic figure because of his repentance, see G. Steiner, 'Tragedy; Remorse and Justice', *Listener* 102 (1979), 508–11.
- 24 See K. J. Dell, *The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature*, BZAW 197, Berlin and New York, W. de Gruyter, 1991; and B. Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint*, New York, OUP, 1991. Parody is argued for in Job by both authors but on different grounds.
- 25 The secondary nature of the Elihu speeches is widely held by scholars, mainly on grounds of structure, since the character is not introduced in the way that the three friends are, and of theme, since there is much repetition of the ideas of others. However there are those who believe that they are part of the original work and even those who see them as the high point of the book.
- 26 The hymn to wisdom is often regarded as a self-contained poem, added by the author or a redactor at a later stage since it is a misfit in its present context.
- 27 Argued by K. J. Dell, *The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature*.
- 28 Argued by K. J. Dell, *The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature*, among others.
- 29 See, e.g., M. Friedländer, *Griechische Philosophie im Alten Testament: eine Einleitung in die Psalmen und Weisliteratur*, Berlin, 1904.
- 30 The precise nature of this technique is open to question. See alternatives aired in J. A. Loader, *Polar Structures in the Book of Qoheleth*, BZAW 152, Berlin, W. de Gruyter, 1979; R. Gordis, 'Quotations as a Literary Usage in Biblical, Oriental, and Rabbinic Literature', *Hebrew Union Annual Review* 22 (1949), 157–219.
- 31 See recently R. N. Whybray, 'Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy', *JSOT* 23 (1982), 87–98.
- 32 E.g. G. H. Wilson, 'The Words of the Wise: The Intent and Significance of Qoheleth 12:9–14', *JBL* 103 (1984), 175–92.
- 33 See discussion in K. J. Dell, 'Ecclesiastes as Wisdom: Consulting Early Interpreters', *VT* 44/3 (1994), 301–29.
- 34 See H. H. Rowley, *Job*, New Century Bible, London, Oliphants, 1970.
- 35 There is considerable discussion among scholars regarding the boundaries of wisdom psalms. See R. E. Murphy, 'A Consideration of the Classification "Wisdom Psalms"', *VTSup* 9, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1962, 160–61; J. K. Kuntz, 'The Canonical Wisdom Psalms of Ancient Israel – their Rhetorical, Thematic and Formal Dimensions', in J. J. Jackson and M. Kessler (eds), *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, PTMS 1, Pittsburgh, Pickwick Press, 1974, 186–222.
- 36 R. N. Whybray, 'The Wisdom Psalms', in J. Day, R. P. Gordon and H. G. M. Williamson (eds), *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton*, Cambridge, CUP, 1995, 152–60.
- 37 See G. H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76, Chico, Scholars Press, 1985, and 'The Shape of the Book of Psalms', *Int* 46 (1992), 129–42.
- 38 S. Mowinckel, 'Psalms and Wisdom', in *Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, *VTSup* 3, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1955, 205–224, and *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, Vol. 2, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1962, ch. 6.
- 39 See discussion in ch. 1 of R. E. Clements, *Wisdom in Theology*, Carlisle, Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992.

- 40 E.g. G. E. Wright wrote in 1952, 'It is the wisdom literature which offers the chief difficulty because it does not fit into the type of faith exhibited in the historical and prophetic literature. In it there is no explicit reference to or development of the doctrines of history, election or covenant' (*God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital*, London, SCM Press, 1952, 103).
- 41 Suggested by B. Gemser, 'The Spiritual Structure of Biblical Aphoristic Wisdom', in J. L. Crenshaw (ed.), *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, New York, Ktav, 1976, 208–19.
- 42 G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd, 1965.
- 43 W. Zimmerli, 'The Place and Limit of Wisdom in the Framework of Old Testament Theology', *SJT* 17, 1964, 146–58. Also, H. H. Schmid, *Wesen und Geschichte der Weisheit: Eine Untersuchung zur altorientalischen und israelitischen Weisheitsliteratur*, BZAW 101, Berlin, W. de Gruyter, 1966.
- 44 M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford, OUP, 1972, discusses possible links.
- 45 See S. Terrien, 'Amos and Wisdom', in B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (eds), *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, London, SCM Press, 1962, 108–15; J. W. Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom*, New York, Abingdon Press, 1971.
- 46 G. von Rad, 'The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom', in idem, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd, 1966, 292–300; R. N. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative*, London, SCM Press, 1968.
- 47 R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*, BZAW 135, Berlin, W. de Gruyter, 1974.
- 48 See further R. J. Williams, 'Wisdom in the Ancient Near East', in IDBSup, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1976, 949–52.
- 49 E. W. Heaton, *Solomon's New Men*, London, Pica Press, 1974. See more recently E. W. Heaton, *The School Tradition in Ancient Israel*, Oxford, OUP, 1994.
- 50 S. Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, Oxford, OUP, 1994; L. L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: Socio-historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel*, Valley Forge, Trinity Press International, 1995.
- 51 Deuteronomy is held to be the law book found in the temple at the time of Josiah, as mentioned in 2 Kings 22:8ff. Furthermore, a section of proverbs, at the very least, was the work of the 'men of Hezekiah', Prov. 25:1. See R. B. Y. Scott, 'Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel', *VTSup* 3, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1955, 262–79, who argues that Hezekiah's reign was a time of significant literary activity.
- 52 Inscriptional and other written evidence is far greater from the eighth century BC onwards. See D. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-archaeological Approach*, JSOT 109, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1991, who argues for the absence of general knowledge of writing before the eighth century BC.
- 53 Text in J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1950.
- 54 Text in J. B. Pritchard, op. cit.
- 55 See J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament*, Cambridge, CUP, 1985, in reference to the Psalms and Genesis.
- 56 S. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*.
- 57 Ancient Near Eastern mythology has been found all over the Old Testament in the imagery used in the Psalms, Pentateuch (notably Genesis 1–11) and prophets.
- 58 M. Weinfeld, op. cit.
- 59 R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*.
- 60 G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 449–50.
- 61 It is a commonly held assumption that Greek ideas have influenced the Wisdom of Solomon. See J. M. Reese, *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and its Consequence*, AnBib 41, Rome, Biblical Institute Press, 1970. Hebraic sources may also have influenced the book, although this is countered strongly by D. Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, AB 43, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, 1979.

- 62 See discussion in B. Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1994.
- 63 H. Conzelmann, 'Paulus und die Weisheit', *NTS* 12, 1965–6, 213–44.
- 64 E.g. P. J. Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1991.
- 65 See discussion of the tension in L. G. Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1991.

CHAPTER EIGHT

APOCALYPTICISM



Christopher Rowland

INTRODUCTION

The biblical world is an apocalyptic world. By that I mean that the whole of the Bible is suffused with a sense of the revelation of God or access to God's secrets, messengers or redeemer. Even if the Bible is not itself a revelation from God it contains that which was revealed to God's agents: the Torah on Sinai; the dreams or visions to the prophets and seers; the words given to the prophets who spoke the name of God; and in the New Testament the person who embodies the divine glory (Christ). For the writers and readers of the Bible the apocalyptic world was the one they inhabited. Angels were not just temporary visitants but in close touch with their earthly counterparts (as Matt. 18.10 indicates). The study of Scripture was carried out in the expectation that there would be insight as well as the divine presence attending such activity. In this the ancient Jews and Christians differed little from their contemporaries in the pagan world save that their God was superior to all the demons and spirits that existed. Such a plethora of divinities required discernment and the cultivation of rules that would allow one to discern the spirit of truth from the spirit of error, to quote the words of 1 John 4.6. What the Dead Sea Scrolls have demonstrated is the way in which human history can be properly understood only through the eye of vision as a struggle between the forces of light and darkness. In this struggle angelic forces are mingled with their earthly counterparts in a vast cosmic drama that encompasses life in the present and the conflicts leading up to the messianic age to come. When we look closely at all the sources, we see that the world that all Jews inhabited, mainstream and sectarian alike, was an apocalyptic one in which the disclosure was always present. For some it might be only through the reading of Scriptures that there opened up a door through which one might perceive the divine mystery. For others there was the real expectation that they had direct access to more arcane secrets. This is put clearly in the words that conclude 4 *Ezra*: 'the Most High said to me, Make public the twenty-four books you wrote first; they are to be read by everyone, whether worthy to do so or not. But the last seventy books are to be kept back, and given to none but the wise among your people; they contain a stream of understanding, a fountain of wisdom, a flood of knowledge' (14.45f.). This is the basis of the thought world of Second

Temple Judaism. It was thoroughly apocalyptic and there was consequently a need to adjudicate between authoritative and spurious claims to the divine mysteries.

As we shall see, apocalyptic ideas are central to New Testament theology. The decisive revelation had come in the gospel of Christ: 'in it the righteousness of God is revealed' (Rom. 1.17).¹ This revelation had ceased to be something just for a learned elite as in 4 *Ezra*. It was immediately available to all who could discern the wisdom of God in the crucified Christ (1 Cor. 1.18). A revelatory strand runs right the way through the New Testament writings challenging assumptions about the marginality of the book of Revelation to early Christian experience. That is not to suggest that what we find in the book of Revelation, and indeed the rest of the New Testament, merely replicates the thought world of the apocalyptic literature of contemporary Judaism, for, as the following survey indicates, there are significant differences as well as similarities between the various apocalyptic texts of the Second Temple period.

REVELATION

Revelation (or 'unveiling', the meaning of the word 'apocalypse') was the catalyst in succeeding centuries for a variety of eschatologically inclined movements and readings of history. It is representative of that spirit of early Christianity which allied expectation of historical change with visionary intuition, endowing its message with authenticity.

Traditionally the book's date has been towards the end of the reign of the emperor Domitian (the mid-nineties), who took action against some members of the imperial household for their atheism (a charge that could equally have been levelled at sympathizers of Judaism and at Christians). This may have been part of a much wider attempt to extract a tax from Jews and sympathizers (Christians would have fallen into that category). In this situation there may have been a wave of sporadic persecution, but there is uncertainty whether it was on the empire-wide scope of earlier persecutions. Evidence from Revelation 17 itself suggests that an earlier date is equally likely. If we identify the kings with the first five Roman emperors, that would take us to Nero. After Nero's death in 68, there were four claimants to the office in a year (Galba, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian who finally became emperor). Revelation 17 points to a date after the fifth king and before the last in the line, who is one of the seven returns. That would seem to exclude the emperor Domitian in whose reign the earliest writers suggested that Revelation was written (e.g. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 5.30.3). The evidence for persecution in Asia Minor at the time of Domitian is non-existent apart from Revelation, though there appears to have been harassment of Jews at the end of Domitian's reign. Domitian claimed for himself the title *dominus ac deus noster*. The external evidence for the book's date is strong for a Domitianic date but the internal evidence of this chapter points in the general direction of a date three decades earlier. Either way the message is unaffected. Contemporary allusions are taken up into the visionary imagination to form part of the prophetic narrative that transcends the particularity of the late first century. Recollections of events, whether in the late sixties at the time of the Jewish Revolt and the chaos after the death of Nero or events in the time of Domitian,

have infused the visionary's imagination and become part of the apparatus of the symbolic world and graphic portrayal that confronts us in Revelation. Their original historical significance is transcended and ceases to determine the import they have within the framework of this apocalyptic prophecy.

Revelation is unconcerned with the minute detail of the heavenly ascent (indeed there is a minimum of interest in the paraphernalia of the apocalyptic ascent), nor does it offer details of what is required of the mystic to make a successful entry into the heavenly palaces. We cannot know what led to John's dramatic meeting with the heavenly Son of Man on the isle of Patmos, even if conjectures may be made about the significance of the time (the Lord's Day) and the place (possibly in exile as was the prophet Ezekiel). The book of Revelation is full of mysteries, the content of which is normally hidden from human gaze. Only special insight can see the door opened in heaven and appreciate that which is normally beyond human comprehension.

Revelation is part of a tradition and is a continuation of much of what has gone before. Ezekiel and Daniel have influenced the form and content of the book. The christophany at its opening via the visions of heaven, the dirge over Babylon, the war against Gog and Magog and finally the vision of the new Jerusalem all bear the marks of influence of the written forms of ancient prophetic imagination on the newer prophetic imagination of John of Patmos. Daniel's beasts from the sea become in John's vision a terrible epitome of all that is most oppressive and yet eerily akin to the way of perfection symbolized by the Lamb that was slain, as the similarity to the character of the Lamb of the description of the head of the beast in Revelation 13.3 and 17.8 suggests. So this unique example in the early Christian literature of the apocalyptic genre is profoundly indebted to Jewish apocalyptic ideas.

The vision of Christ marks the very start of John's revelation. After the instruction to write the letters to the seven churches (a scribal role resembling that of Enoch in 1 *Enoch* 12–14), John is called to heaven in the spirit and is granted a vision of the divine throne with one seated upon it. There is at the start of this new dimension of John's vision a vision of the throne that owes some of its details to Ezekiel 1 and to the related passage in Isaiah 6. The seer is offered a glimpse of a reality cut off from normal human gaze and opened up only to the privileged seer. There is no mention of a heavenly journey in this text preceding the granting of the vision of God. Indeed, Revelation is singularly lacking in the complex cosmology typical of later Jewish apocalyptic texts and is sparse in the details communicated about the heavenly world.

What is most distinctive about Revelation 4, however, is the vision that immediately follows it, which subtly subverts and reorientates the Ezekielian vision in the direction of the fulfilment of Ezekiel's promise. The scene in heaven is transformed in [chapter 5](#). John sees the scroll with seven seals, which contains the divine will for the inauguration of the eschatological process. The means of the initiation of that process turns out to be the coming of the Messiah, the Lion of Judah. The paradox is that this Messianic Lion turns out to be a Lamb with the marks of death. Superficially, the scene is similar to that described in Daniel 7.9, where there is also a heavenly court. Whereas in the latter a human figure comes to take divine authority, here it is an animal. This parallels the way in which in 1 *Enoch* 89–90

animals represent men. Clearly, it was the Lamb's marks of slaughter that qualified it to have this supreme eschatological role and to share the divine throne (Rev. 7.17). At first the Lamb stands as one of the heavenly throng, but wins the right to superiority and the privilege of divine power, as the result of the conquest wrought through death.

The sequence of seals, trumpets and bowls is initiated by the Lamb taking the heavenly book (chs 5, 6, 8–9 and 16). It is the predetermined evolution of the divine purposes in history as the structures of the world give way to the Messianic age (the millennium). Judgement is necessary because there is no sign of repentance. God's righteousness reveals itself in judgement against humanity because of the alienation of human society from the way of God. The reality the Apocalypse shows is that in a disordered world death and destruction are the lot of millions, and the putting right of wrongs demands a seismic shift of cosmic proportions that will happen if humankind does not repent.

The opening of the seals unleashes the Four Horsemen with their destructive potential. This is suddenly interrupted in chapter 7: the sealing of the servants of God with the seal of the living God. There is a contrast here similar to that found in chapters 13 and 14. There the contrast is between bearing the mark of the Beast (13.17; 14.9) and having the name of God written on the forehead (14.1). Here the opening of the seals means judgement for a disobedient world, whereas there is hope for those who are sealed with God's name.

In chapters 10–11 the seer is involved in the unfolding eschatological drama of the apocalypse when he is instructed to eat the scroll and commanded to prophesy. The prophetic commission is followed in chapter 11 by a vision in which the church is offered a paradigm of the true prophetic witness as it sets out to fulfil its vocation to prophesy before the world. Juxtaposed with the vision of the two witnesses, their death and vindication is another vision about persecution. The message is quite a simple one: a pregnant woman is threatened by a dragon. She gives birth to a male child who is precious to God as the Messiah. There is divine protection for both. That is followed immediately by the account of another struggle in which there is war in heaven between Michael and the dragon who had persecuted the woman. Michael and his forces prevail, which means that there is no longer a place in heaven for the dragon. The vision seems to suggest that the picture of a heavenly struggle is closely linked with the earthly struggle of those who seek to be disciples of Jesus to maintain their testimony. The consequence of the defeat of Satan in heaven is that no place was found in heaven, and a particular target of his attack is 'those who keep God's commandments' and maintain their witness to Jesus. The Beast is the incarnation of the fallen Satan, the Devil, and attracts universal admiration for acts that appear to be beneficial. The imagery here is well known in Jewish apocalyptic literature (it is used in Daniel 7) as a way of referring to world governments and in John's day would have applied particularly to Rome.

In the new creation there is a very different cosmological pattern. The celestial city as a whole reflects the proportions of the Holy of Holies from which anything unclean was vigorously excluded (21.27). There is immediate access of the saints to God. The references to the heavenly temple in the book suggest that in a situation

where God's will is not done, the Temple in heaven is a sign – unnecessary in the new creation – of the divine dimension to existence.

The throne of God runs like a thread binding the different visions of the Apocalypse together. It is the destiny of the elect and a sign of authority in the universe contrasting with that other locus of power in the cosmos which deludes the world's inhabitants (2.13; 13.2). Worship of the one who sits on the throne marks recognition of true sovereignty and is the basis of true service. In Revelation 21 the tabernacling of God with humankind is fulfilled in the new creation. There is a contrast between the vision of the New Jerusalem in [chapter 21](#) with the initial vision of the heavenly court in [chapter 4](#). In Revelation 4 the seer is granted a glimpse into the environs of God. This contrast between heaven and earth disappears in the new creation where the tabernacle of God is with humanity. God's dwelling is not to be found above the cherubim in heaven; for his throne is set right in the midst of the New Jerusalem where the living waters stream from the throne of God and his servants marked with the mark of God will see him face to face. It is only in the New Jerusalem that there will be the conditions for God and humanity to dwell in that harmony. God is no longer transcendent but immediate. Indeed, those who are his will be his children and carry his name on their heads: they will be identified with the character of God and enjoy the divine presence. Here Revelation comes as near as anywhere to speaking of the transformation of the elect into the divine. So the book's climax speaks of the goal of the mystical ascent to heaven and the immediate presence of God. What is clear is that as far as John is concerned, what is needful are not the ritual preparations of fasting and prayer but lives lived in conformity with the divine holiness, thereby keeping sufficient distance from the contamination of the Beast whose allure in particular can prevent access to the vision of God.

The Apocalypse sets out to reveal things as they really are in both the life of the Christian communities and the world at large. The critique of the present is effected by the use of a contrast between the glories of the future and the inadequacies of the present. John's vision offers the reader a glimpse of reality, so that the distortions of present perception may be understood and action appropriate to the reality now offered in the vision embarked on. The glory the apocalyptic seer enjoyed in his revelation was a matter of living experience here and now for those who confessed Jesus as Messiah and participated in the eschatological spirit. Already those who possessed the spirit of God were sons and daughters of God; already those in Christ were a new creation and a Temple of the divine Spirit. What is more, evidence of divine providence could be discerned with the eye of vision in the death and destruction that was the outworking of the wrath of the Lamb.

DANIEL

The one Old Testament Apocalypse contains a mixture of stories concerning the activity of a Jewish elite in Babylon, chief among whom is Daniel, their activities in discerning the mysterious dreams and signs that confront Babylonian kings, and the limits of compromise that lead to persecution. The second half of the book is a series of visions about the future purposes of God, which, though given in the time

of the Exile, relates to the political situation in the middle of the second century BCE. Its scope is international and relates the life of the righteous people to the succession of world empires, and offers promise to the righteous of their eschatological vindication (Dan. 12.2 contains the first explicit doctrine of resurrection in the Bible).

A comparison of Revelation with Daniel reveals differences as well as similarities. In certain visions Revelation is clearly indebted to Daniel (e.g. Dan. 10 in 1:13ff.; Dan. 7 in [chs 13](#) and [17](#)). Both are eschatologically orientated. Unlike Revelation, however, Daniel is pseudonymous (probably written in the second century BCE at the height of the crisis in Jerusalem under the Seleucid king Antiochus IV discussed in 1 Maccabees). John's authority resides primarily in his prophetic call (1:9ff.) rather than any claim to antiquity or apostolicity. The form of the visions differs also. The dream-vision followed by interpretation is almost completely lacking (Rev. 17 is a solitary exception where contemporary historical connections are most explicitly made).

There is in Revelation a more distanced and antagonistic attitude to empire. Although Revelation 18, briefly, reflects on Babylon's fall from the perspective of the kings, the mighty and the merchants, the position is one of vigorous rejection of the power and effects of empire and of satisfaction at the ultimate triumph of God's righteousness (14:11; 19:3). Whereas Daniel presents individuals who are immersed in the life of the pagan court, Revelation countenances no such accommodation. The only strategies are resistance and withdrawal (18.4). Accommodation may be a sign of apostasy (Rev. 2:20ff.). Pagans react with awe (6:15), fear (11:10), and anger at God (6:10; 9:20).

In Daniel a significant part of the book has to do with the royal court in Babylon, and [chapter 2](#) offers an interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Here are men who are comfortable, respected Jews who have a good reputation in the land of their exile, though there is nostalgia for Zion (Dan. 6:10) and limits on what the Jews described in these stories are prepared to compromise. As in Revelation, idolatry is the problem (Dan. 3). The fiery furnace and the lions' den are the terrible consequence for those who refuse to conform. Yet there is evidence of admiration on the part of the king (cf. the signs of that in Rev. 11:13) and a reluctance to see these significant courtiers die. Nebuchadnezzar is depicted with a degree of sympathy (unlike Belshazzar in Dan. 4). Those who resist the imperial system are prepared to face suffering but have miraculous escapes. This contrasts somewhat with Revelation where persecution is expected to include suffering and death (2:11; 6:9; 7:14; 11:7; 13:10; 12:11). In Revelation there is promise of vindication (11:7f.) but a clear recognition that there can be no escape from the great tribulation (7:14).

1 ENOCH

I Enoch opens with a statement of the inevitability of divine judgement. Enoch describes himself as a righteous man whose eyes were opened by the Lord and who saw a holy vision in the heavens. This is followed by a more reflective section typical of some strands of the earlier Wisdom tradition of the Bible in which the reader is asked to contemplate the universe, to 'understand how the eternal God made all

these things' (5.2). The contemplation of the universe and the human place in it turns abruptly to condemnation. In the following chapters the myth of the angels, the sons of heaven, who desired the daughters of man and woman, parallel Genesis 6. We have in these chapters an alternative account of the corruption of the earth parallel to the opening chapters of Genesis. God's response is to warn the son of Lamech that the whole earth will be destroyed by a deluge, as a preliminary to the restoration of the earth, which the Watchers have ruined. Enoch's position on the boundary between angels and humans gave him access to divine secrets and results in him being asked to intercede on behalf of the fallen angels. This he does, to no avail, following an ascent to heaven. He is then led by the angels to different parts of the cosmos and is shown its secrets as well as the mystery of divine judgement on the Watchers. Enoch eventually reaches Paradise.

At the beginning of the next section of the book, the so-called parables, probably much later than the opening chapters and with many features that distinguish it from the rest of the collection, we have a heterogeneous collection of material that mixes an account of Enoch's activities with God (known as the Lord of the Spirits), in which he describes a figure 'like a son of man' (this section of *1 Enoch* has many connections with the Son of Man sayings in the gospels). In addition to eschatological secrets we have a repeat of the Flood story, in which Enoch enters into dialogue with Noah (parallel to material at the end of this collection in chapters 102–3 and in the fragmentary apocryphal text the *Genesis Apocryphon* from Cave 1 at Qumran). The book of the parables closes with an account of Enoch's ascent to heaven where he is greeted as the son of man.

There is an abrupt transition in chapter 72 to a section dealing with astronomical material, parallels to which have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. What is distinctive about this is the peculiar calendar based on solar rather than lunar calculations referred to also in the book of *Jubilees* 6.32–3. This material Enoch reads in the heavenly tablets and in addition Enoch passes on other awesome visions concerning the future of the earth, one of which is a long symbolic vision. This is often called the Animal Apocalypse because it uses animal symbolism to describe the course of the world from creation to eschatological redemption. Another is an account of history partitioned schematically into Ten Weeks of years with a similar kind of historical scope. The book closes with a collection of advice and warning from Enoch to his children with woes for the rich and powerful and vindication for the humble and meek. This advice is grounded in the fact that Enoch has read the divine secrets written on the heavenly tablets, a reflection of which is now contained in the earthly writing that purports to present Enoch's insight.

4 EZRA, SYRIAC BARUCH AND THE APOCALYPSE OF ABRAHAM

Three apocalypses usually dated to around the end of the first century CE offer contrasting attitudes in their form and content. There is similarity of outlook in the first two, which have led some to suppose some kind of literary relationship between them.

In *4 Ezra* eschatological beliefs make their appearance but there emerges, possibly for the first time in such an explicit form, evidence for a hope for a new age that is transcendent, though it appears, however, alongside the conventional hope for a this-worldly reign of God (7.28f.; cf. 5.45; cf. Rev. 20–1). More prominent is another concern: the apparent inscrutability and mercilessness of God. There is a concern for the majority of humanity whose unrighteousness seems to be about to consign them to perdition. At times it appears that Ezra's concerns are more merciful than the divine reply. Such sentiments, however, are dealt with by urging the righteous to concentrate on the glory that awaits those who are obedient to God. God's patience is not for the sake of humanity but because of faithfulness to the eternal plan laid down before creation. What the righteous need to do is to view all things in the light of the eschatological consummation rather than concentrate exclusively on the apparent injustices of the present. Throughout, the ways of God are vindicated. Just as in the book of Job where the divine answer contrasts human and divine wisdom, so here too the impossibility of understanding the divine purposes in the midst of the old order is stressed.

Ezra longs for the righteousness of the holy to be taken into account when God judges Israel, but the sense of solidarity with the people disappears. The righteous are urged to attend to their destiny and concentrate on obedience to the law of God. The problem with humanity is that it has continued to sin even though God has endowed it with understanding (cf. Rev. 9.20). In the closing chapters of the book there is an eschatological promise for those who endure to the end, and the might of Rome is to be vanquished by God's Messiah.

In *Syriac Baruch* there is a more obvious concern with the destruction of Jerusalem (the setting of the book is the eve of the fall of Solomon's Temple). The reader is left in little doubt that this destruction is not only ordained by God but carried out with God's participation (chs 3 and 80). Israel is culpable and entirely deserves judgement at God's hand. Zion's destruction paves the way for God's eschatological act when the nations are to be judged. As in *4 Ezra* there is questioning of the way the world is: is there any profit in being righteous (ch. 14)? There is assurance that for those like Baruch and Ezra there is the promise of being 'taken up'. In the present what is essential is obedience to the Law. Continual vigilance is necessary as there is nothing left but this one guide to God's purposes and demands. Humanity to which God has given understanding is without excuse and deserves to be punished. Eschatological material serves to remind the reader of the imminent consummation of all things and the present need to use the limited guide available that will enable achievement of Paradise.

The issues raised are what might have been expected of Jews after the traumatic experience of 70 CE. The burning question in both *4 Ezra* and *Syriac Baruch* is not so much 'When will the End be?' but 'How can one make sense of the present and ensure participation in the eschatological Paradise of God?' Eschatology forms a part of the divine answers to the seers' questions that usually concern pressing matters of present concern.

APOCALYPSES: CHARACTER AND ORIGINS

Apocalypses that purport to offer revelations of divine secrets are similar in form and content to the New Testament apocalypse, from which (Rev. 1.1 'apocalypse of Jesus Christ') they derive their generic description. The use of the words *apokalypsis/apokalypto* (reveal or unveil) to describe revelation of God or divine secrets is relatively rare in literature written round about the time of Revelation. In Theodotion's Greek translation of the Old Testament *apokalypto* is introduced in passages where the earlier Greek had other words. The words are more common in the New Testament. In the gospels 'apocalypse' is found at Luke 2:32 and Luke 2.35, of divine secrets (Matt. 11.25/Luke 10.21; Matt. 16.17), and of God in Matthew 11.27, and of the day of the Son of Man in Luke 17.30. An apocalyptic outlook is central to Paul's self-understanding as the autobiographical account of the origin of his apostolic mission in Galatians indicates (Gal. 1:12).

The origins of this literary genre are much disputed but it is clear that in their concerns with the mysteries of God and the divine purposes they have a close affinity with the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. In addition, in some of their concerns, particularly the future hope, the apocalypses draw heavily on prophetic passages. Nevertheless, there have been those who have argued for a link with the Wisdom tradition of Israel, and certainly in the questioning spirit evident in so much of the apocalypses such a connection is not difficult to find.

The fact that there is only one apocalypse included in the canon of the Old Testament, the book of Daniel should not be taken as an indication that the compilers of the canon did not have much interest in the apocalyptic tradition, as it is clear that there was a lively apocalyptic oral tradition in Judaism. Of this the written apocalypses are probably evidence. This tradition has a long history. The discovery of fragments of the Enoch apocalypse at Qumran have pushed the date of this particular text back well before the second century BCE; back, in other words into that obscure period when the prophetic voice began to die out in Israel. The literary evidence of the apocalyptic outlook suggests that it continued to play a vital part within Israelite religion throughout the period of the Second Temple, and even in rabbinic circles persisted as an esoteric tradition that manifested itself in written form in the *Hekaloth* tracts in which rabbinic mystics described their ascents to heaven and the techniques needed to achieve such mystical contemplation.

In the Mishnah (*Hag.* 2.1) brief reference is made to exposition of the [first chapters](#) of Genesis and Ezekiel. The cryptic reference there suggests that it is a matter of some concern to the authors and is an anticipation of the central importance mystical and apocalyptic ideas had in the religion of rabbinic Judaism. The Mishnah forbids the use of Ezekiel 1 as a synagogue reading. The *merkabah* (the short-hand way of referring to the call vision of Ezekiel) is linked with apocalyptic-wisdom tradition and is concerned with divine secrets.

Such esoteric traditions associated with Ezekiel 1 were inherited from an apocalyptic milieu. These traditions had both an exegetical component (i.e. they arose as the result of interpretative activity) and also a 'mystical' aspect. Ecstatic-mystical and esoteric exegetical traditions were being developed in circles associated with some rabbinic teachers during the first century CE. By the early second century the

esoteric tradition was known to and practised by leading rabbis such as Akiba. Thus some controversy concerning the status and legitimacy of the tradition is likely to have occurred during the first century, probably because of the way in which such traditions were developed in extrarabbinic circles, not least Christianity. We know Paul was influenced by apocalyptic ascent ideas (2 Cor. 12.2ff.) and emphasizes the importance of this visionary element as the basis of his practice (Gal. 1.12 and 1.16; cf. Acts 22.17). Perhaps he should be linked with those other significant figures who became either marginal to rabbinic Judaism or a focus of hostility: Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, Eleazar ben Arak and Elisha ben Abuyah. After all, his apocalyptic outlook enabled him to act on his eschatological convictions, so that his apocalypse of Jesus Christ became the basis for his practice of admitting Gentiles to the Messianic age without the Law of Moses. His relegation of Sinai to the new covenant in the Messiah contrasts with the firm subordination of the apocalyptic spirit of Ezekiel 1 to the Sinai theophany in the rabbinic mystical traditions. The threat posed by apocalyptic may be discerned elsewhere (and indeed could have contributed to the development of christology in early Christianity). It may be that the controversy about two centres of divine power with roots deep within the apocalyptic tradition may lie behind the stories of the confrontation of an early second-century Jewish teacher, Elisha ben Abuyah with Metatron, a mysterious angelic figure who is called 'the little Yahweh' and has several affinities in status with the exalted Christ of early christology.

It is now no longer possible to reconstruct the content of *merkabah* tradition in the late first century with any degree of certainty. The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice from Cave 4 at Qumran as well as apocalypses such as 1 *Enoch* and Revelation 4 indicate that such mystical interest antedates the fall of the Second Temple. Meditation on passages like Ezekiel 1, set as it is in Exile and in the aftermath of a previous destruction of the Temple, would have been particularly apposite as the rabbis sought to come to terms with the devastation of 70 CE. Of course, if some influential rabbis were hostile to this kind of activity, we should expect the sources to be very reticent about the kinds of activities that went on, especially when the practice was liable to cause theological deviance from the normal practice recommended by the majority of Jewish teachers. This reserve is exactly what is found in the earliest rabbinic sources. There is more evidence available in later sources, however, such as the Talmud and more overtly mystical writings, known as the *Hekaloth* literature because they tell of journeys made to the heavenly palaces. What was later to become the *Hekaloth* visionary tradition was a synthesis of a number of different traditions that employed a variety of texts, pre-eminently Ezekiel 1, Isaiah 6 and the Song of Songs (the latter being particularly important for the *shi'ur qomah* (the speculation based on Ezek. 1.25–8 about the nature of the body of God). The focus of the tradition was the throne-chariot of God and the glorious figure enthroned upon it.

The apocalypses are the most significant group of writings of all the intertestamental literature. Their concerns with the mysteries of God and the divine purposes suggest a close affinity with the prophetic literature and the varied means of apprehending the divine counsel found therein. Indeed, we may suppose that what we find in the apocalypses is the form of the prophetic tradition as it emerged in the Hellenistic age, shot through with elements from the Wisdom books and with its own distinctive revelatory style.

There was a lively apocalyptic oral tradition in Judaism. This tradition has a long history. The discovery of fragments of the Enoch apocalypse at Qumran has pushed the date of this particular text back well before the second century BCE, back, in other words, into that obscure period when the canonical prophecy of Malachi and the latest chapters of Isaiah were written. While the apocalypses are by and large the largest repository of the future hope among the Jewish texts now extant, we have not exhausted their significance once we have recognized the eschatological concerns of this literature. Other matters obtrude: for example, the vision of heaven, angelology, theodicy and astronomy. The fact that several apocalypses have turned up in the gnostic library from Nag Hammadi indicates that the relationship between apocalyptic and gnosticism, which in the past has not been obvious, needs to be reassessed, particularly in the light of the common concern of both the apocalypses and the gnostic texts with knowledge.

In the discussion of apocalyptic since the 1970s or so, there has been a significant difference of opinion about its origins. On the one hand there are those who consider that apocalyptic is the successor to the prophetic movement, and particularly to the future hope of the prophets. On the other hand the Wisdom tradition of the Old Testament with its interest in understanding the cosmos and the ways of the world is a component of apocalyptic. The activities of certain wise men in antiquity were not at all dissimilar from the concerns of the writers of the apocalypses. Traces of this kind of wisdom, concerned as it is with the interpretation of dreams, oracles, astrology and the ability to divine mysteries concerning future events are to be found in the Old Testament; for example in the Joseph stories in Genesis. Most obviously it is present in the stories about Daniel, the Jewish seer who interprets the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and is regarded as a superior sage to all those in the king's court. Dreams, visions and the like are all typical features of the apocalypses, and it is now recognized that this aspect of the Wisdom tradition may indeed provide an important contribution to our understanding of apocalyptic origins. In addition, *4 Ezra* is preoccupied with theodicy and suffering and has several affinities with the book of Job, and the Enochic literature includes astrology and rudimentary geography.

Apocalypses reveal that which is hidden in order to enable readers to understand their situation from the divine perspective. They seek to offer an understanding that bypasses the conventional means of discerning the divine will by being grounded in the direct disclosure through vision or audition. The apocalypse unmasks the real significance of past, present and future.

There has been much confusion in the discussion of apocalyptic, in particular its relationship to eschatology. In discussions of both subjects the two are closely related and can often be used interchangeably. It is probably better to reserve eschatology for the various beliefs found in ancient Jewish and Christian texts concerned with the divine purposes for the future. Despite the widespread view which asserts that there existed in Judaism two types of future hope (a national eschatology and an other-worldly eschatology found principally in the apocalypses), the evidence indicates that such a dichotomy cannot be easily substantiated. The doctrine of the future hope as it is found in the apocalypses is on the whole consistent with the expectation found in other Jewish sources. We should then use apocalyptic as a way

of describing an epistemology, which characterized an expectation that the divine could inform and indeed invade what passes for normal attempts to discern the divine will through study and interpretation of Scripture. So that dream, angelic pronouncement or even ecstatic vision can supplement, or on rare occasions even countermand, that which has been received or worked out by means of painstaking interpretation.

THE SOCIAL SETTING

Apocalypses are often seen as a body of protest literature of a marginalized minority. Post-exilic Judaism was characterized by a polarization between a powerful hierarchy and groups whose views are represented in the writings of the apocalypses. Such marginality is sometimes linked with a despair of political change and a consequent retreat from hope in the fulfilment of the divine promises in history. No neat division can be made between the dominant and the marginal, for all used apocalyptic ideas and all expected hope to be fulfilled on this earth. Indeed, the Dead Sea Scrolls with their hostility towards the Temple suggest an expectation of a day when the cult was organized on the right lines.

When apocalyptic ideas are linked with sectarian traditions in the early modern and the modern periods, it is easy to see why commentators suppose that the apocalypses must be the particular product of the religious and political aspirations of the marginalized and disinherited. Study of the apocalypses reveals that they contain a vast array of different subjects (the future purposes of God; astronomical mysteries; descriptions of heaven; angels; and theodicy topics), which were of just as much concern to the learned groups within Second Temple Judaism.

Writing apocalypses was not a task for the uneducated. Certainly it may have been carried out by the marginalized as the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate. All the evidence suggests that we have in the extant literature the views of those who were sophisticated enough to write down their beliefs and practices. In the Dead Sea Scrolls it is apparent that we have the ideology of a group whose origin at least was among some of the most self-consciously elite members of Israelite society: the priests. Nowhere more than in the case of the priesthood was there a concern to make sure that the power was kept in the hands of that elite.

In its emphasis on revelation apocalyptic can seem to offer an easy solution whereby divine intervention offering insight to unfathomable human problems can cut the knot of intractable problems. It can be an antidote to a radical pessimism whose exponents despair of ever being able to make sense of the contradictions of human existence by means of the revelation of God. The kinds of answers offered by the apocalypses are by no means uniform, however. There are apocalypses (or at least parts of them) that use the concept of revelation to offer a definitive solution to human problems. So we find particularly in a work like the book of *Jubilees* an angelic revelation to Moses on Sinai in which there is a retelling of biblical history following the sequence of what is found in Scripture. There are divergences, the significance of which is nowhere greater than when halakic questions emerge. The fact that the book is a revelation to Moses functions to vindicate one side in contentious moral matters in Second Temple Judaism and to anathematize opponents. In this

situation the text's meaning is transparent and is promulgated as the final, authoritative, pronouncement.

Not all apocalypses offer unambiguous and exclusive answers that seem to brook no dispute, however. They certainly offer revelation, much of which is in effect what was traditionally believed already. The horizon of hope is reaffirmed by revelation and the historical perspective of salvation supported. But sometimes the form of the revelation is such that it can produce as much mystification as enlightenment. There is frequently need for angelic interpretation of enigmatic dreams and visions (this happens occasionally in Revelation; e.g. at 7.14; 17.15). Even these angelic interpretations are not without their problems. It proved necessary for revelations coined in one era to be the basis of 'updating' and application in the different political circumstances of another. Thus the symbolism of the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is given new meaning in the Roman period when it ceases to refer to Greece but instead is applied to Rome (a process that continued, as the history of the interpretation of Dan. 7 shows). Examples of this may be found in both Revelation 13 and in 4 *Ezra* 12. So some apocalypses do not provide 'answers' through revelation and offer nothing more than the refusal of a complete answer as being something beyond the human mind to grasp. Instead, there is a plethora of imagery or enigmatic pronouncement that leaves the reader either with no possibility of ever knowing the mind of God, or gives tantalizing glimpses in the enigmatic symbols of dreams and visions. In 4 *Ezra* the seer wishes to know why Israel has been allowed to suffer and why God seems content to allow the bulk of humanity to perish. The revelation, akin to God's answer in the final chapters of the book of Job, is to stress the puny nature of human understanding in the face of the transcendence of God, to stress the ultimate victory of God's righteousness and to urge the need for those committed to the ways of God to continue in the narrow way that leads to eschatological salvation. There is no solution to the problem posed by the human seer, at least in terms that the seer could understand.

The problem with humanity is that even though God has endowed it with understanding (a theme reminiscent of that found in Rev. 9.20) there is incomprehension and unwillingness to change. Evil permeates the human mind and makes it difficult for men and women either to fulfil the divine command or to glimpse the totality of reality *sub specie aeternitatis*. *Fourth Ezra* purges the mind of any presumption to be able to fathom the wisdom of God because of the error of the assumptions that a corrupted mind engenders. Those who, like Ezra, continue in obedience, a way of life that seems so pointless, receive reassurance that faithful endurance will pay off ultimately. That is the only kind of answer on offer in this tantalizing apocalypse.

The persistent concern throughout the earlier part of the dialogue between Ezra and the angel is the exploration of the conditions for understanding the ways of God. It is a theme that forms a central concern of John 3. In the dialogue of Jesus with Nicodemus Jesus' response, which hardly begins to engage with the substance of Nicodemus's discourse, cannot begin to engage with the wisdom of the world, which remains, in the person of Nicodemus, dull and uncomprehending. For Nicodemus to see the Kingdom of God there is need for a complete transformation, epistemological and social, a move from a position of power as a leader to share the

lot of Jesus and those who followed the one whom they considered the emissary from heaven. When persons come to baptism, they enter the realm of light and their perspective on reality changes. They then see that their deeds were evil and that in the past they loved darkness rather than light.

APOCALYPTIC IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

It should come as no surprise that all parts of the New Testament are permeated with this outlook. Early Christians emphasized access to the divine power, and this may have been an important element of its appeal. Paul, for example, in several of his letters made much of the dramatic, charismatic and experiential as bases for his arguments for his particular understanding of religion. The conviction about the access to privileged knowledge of the divine purposes was in certain cases linked to decisive action. The Scriptures are now read in the light of the conviction that the age of the Spirit has come. Christians in Corinth, for example, are told that they were fortunate to be alive when the decisive moment in history came about (1 Cor. 10.11). So the present has become the moment to which all the Scriptures have been pointing, though their meaning can only be fully understood with that divinely inspired intuition which flows from acceptance of the Messiah.

Paul speaks about the centrality of the divine revelation (Gal. 1.12 and 16). In the early Christian story other decisive moments have at their centre visionary insight (Mark 1.10; Acts 10–11). In the case of Peter in Acts 10 the vision is used, in part at least, as the basis of the new turn in Christian practice: the admission of the Gentiles into the people of God. Similarly, while Scripture may be used to support a divine mystery, it is that which is the basis of Paul's conviction about the future salvation of Israel (e.g. Rom. 11.25). Significant shifts in opinion might be the subject of intense wrangling and discussion but are offered as the result of some kind of supernatural validation. Such an appeal to visions might not matter if the subject matter was itself uncontroversial. When it becomes the basis for a significant new departure it becomes problematic.

The central role that prophecy played within early Christianity indicates the problems posed by claims to divine inspiration. When these involved controversial items of behaviour, they would have been very much to the fore in debates between adherents of Messianism and those who dissented from these convictions. All this could have been lived with if there had not been a substantial difference of opinion over an area of halakah. Religious authority claimed as a result of experience of God was something that had a continuing history within early Christianity. The Nag Hammadi texts indicate the extent of the influence of the apocalypticism, both in the use of the genre of the apocalypse and in the persistence of typical apocalyptic themes, albeit in a gnostic guise. Threats from individuals or groups who claimed divine support by means of visions and revelations seem to have been quite a pressing problem (*Didache* 11.3ff. and 16.3; cf. 1 Tim, 4.1; cf. Jude 4ff.). If Paul could claim authority on the basis of a vision as also did John of Patmos, what was to distinguish them from those visionaries who came to be regarded with suspicion by later Christians? After all, their esoteric teaching too was communicated with all the marks of divine authority? The heart of early Christian self-

understanding was its realized Messianism authenticated by the apocalyptic insight. Eschatological conviction is the content of the message, but the means whereby individuals came to apprehend its meaning came through claims to visions from God. What we find in earliest Christianity is apocalyptic functioning as the basis of its Messianic convictions.

The application of apocalyptic imagery to contemporary institutions came naturally to most early Christians. It was not just an optional mode of discourse that one could either take or leave. Antichrist was no remote, supernatural, figure. The solitary New Testament appearance of Antichrist refers not to supernatural figures but to the heretical and immoral opponents of the writer of 1 John: 'Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come . . . They went out from us . . . that it might be plain that they all are not of us' (1 John 2.18–19). The present is permeated with a critical character.

Significant strands within the New Testament exhibit an outlook that invests present persons and events with a decisive role in the fulfilment of the Last Things. In various texts of the New Testament there are signs that the present becomes a moment of opportunity for transforming the imperfect into the perfect; history and eschatology become inextricably intertwined, and the elect stand on the brink of the Messianic age itself. Of course, the event of Jesus' life in due course became hallowed as the irruption of the divine into history. Nevertheless, in many of the stories told about him he is presented as proclaiming the present as decisive in God's purposes and himself as the Messianic agent for change. But not as some dreamer awaiting the apocalyptic miracle wrought by God alone. It has been wrongly assumed that Jesus' and the early Christians' *eschatological* expectation was for an act of God brought in by God alone without any human agency, humankind being merely passive spectators of a vast divine drama with the cosmos as its stage. The foundation documents of Christianity suggest a different story. For many of their writers history is illuminated by apocalypse; vision opens ultimate possibilities, and responsibilities that others could only dream of. Thereby they are equipped with insight hidden to others and privileged to enjoy a role in history denied even to the greatest figures of the past. 1 Peter 1.11–12 speaks for the outlook of many other New Testament documents in its emphasis on the privilege of the writer's time: 'It was revealed to [the prophets] that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you . . . things into which angels long to look'. For Paul the apostolic task is not a parochial affair, for the apostles themselves are engaged in an enterprise on a truly cosmic scale (1 Cor. 4.10) as God's fellow-workers (3.9). The apostle sees himself as an architect working according to a divine master-plan, parallel to Moses himself. Indeed, that to which the apostles are bearing witness is itself an apocalyptic event and they are stewards of the divine mysteries (1 Cor. 4.1).

Despite the lack of apocalyptic terminology in the gospel, John is concerned with the revelation of divine mysteries. The quest for the highest wisdom of all, the knowledge of God, comes not through the information disclosed in visions and revelations but through the Word become flesh, Jesus of Nazareth, and through the activity of the Spirit/Paraclete who is ultimately dependent on the Son. John's gospel

is permeated with a major theme of the apocalypses: revelation. Jesus proclaims himself as the revelation of the hidden God. He tells Philip, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (14:9) and, at the conclusion of the Prologue, the Evangelist speaks of the Son in the following way: 'No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known' (1:18). The vision of God is related in the Fourth Gospel to the revelation of God in Jesus. No one has seen God except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father (6:46). The vision of God reserved in the book of Revelation for the fortunate seer (4.1) and for the inhabitants of the 'new Jerusalem' who will see God face to face (22.4) is found, according to the Fourth Evangelist, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

An interesting thing about Luke's account of visions is that it gives an insight into the problems posed by resort to visions. In Acts 10 there is no angelic interpretation of the meaning of the vision. Peter may initially be left at a loss as he is confronted with the need to make sense of what has appeared to him. In Acts 10.28 Peter has drawn the conclusion that if he is allowed to eat anything without discrimination he is also obliged to regard all human persons in the same way.

The problematic character of resort to visions and dreams as a way of settling ethical disputes, so important in Deuteronomy 13, 18.20, is hinted at only in the reserve expressed by the elders in Jerusalem. The fact that a dreamer of dreams might lead Israel astray (Deut. 13) is not contemplated by an author who has every confidence that the voice of God is to be heard in the experience of those heroes of Christian origins. This is not surprising, not only because the writer can with the benefit of hindsight have confidence that the movement is of God (cf. Acts 5.39) but also because his record of the significant role of the heavenly vision is used with discrimination. These are no ordinary people who receive visions. Even the radical Stephen is subtly woven into the fabric of the early Christian authority structure by his role as one who served at tables but ended up being an early protagonist for a radically disjunctive form of Judaism.

Acts is a story primarily about apostles who are duly commissioned (and that even includes Paul who just manages to make the grade). As such they can be safely entrusted with visions because they would be no false prophets. There is no sense that *anyone* could come along with an 'apocalypse' as contemplated by 1 Corinthians 14.26 (though here too in 1 Cor. 14.30 discrimination is needed) or claim to be an authoritative prophet as the Montanists were to do in the mid-second century and claim the inspiration of the Spirit-Paraclete. Joel may have prophesied that the Spirit would fall on all flesh and 'your sons and daughters would prophesy' but it is only chosen 'sons' whose stories are allowed to be recorded in Acts even if the daughters' prophetic powers may be alluded to in passing (21.9). Agabus, it is true, emerges as a significant figure (mentioned in 11.28) but his intervention later in the narrative predicting Paul's capture, which leads to fellow-Christians seeking to dissuade Paul from his chosen strategy, is not allowed to interfere with the working out of 'the Lord's will' (21.14; cf. 11.18) as Paul goes up to Jerusalem. The account is a paradigm for an understanding of God's activity, which remains in part faithful to the ecumenical spirit of the Joel quotation in Acts 2.17ff. Nevertheless, it is no ordinary person who is converted. Luke makes it quite clear in his description of Cornelius that he is just the sort of person with whom God might be expected to be happy.

Luke's narrative is imbued with a sense of inevitability and conformity with the manifest purposes of God. Just as Josephus had introduced his description of the climax of the Jewish War (*War* 6.289) in 70 CE when Titus's legionaries raised their standards in the Temple by reporting the plain warnings of God in the form of prodigies and prophecies, so Luke's narrative is peppered with visions and angelic appearances that point in the direction of the veracity of the Christian claims for those with eyes to see them. Gamaliel perhaps voices the author's desire to persuade his readers that there can be no brooking the divine purposes (5.39; cf. 11.17f. and 21.14). Just as Josephus used the divine oracles of old to validate Roman imperial claims, the frequent insertion into the narrative of the visionary and angelic pronouncement serves to remind the reader that this is no ordinary story, however insignificant and unremarkable the participants.

Revelation's purpose is to reveal that which is hidden in order to enable readers to understand their situation from the divine perspective. Like the apocalypses of Judaism it seeks to offer an understanding that bypasses human reason by being grounded in direct disclosure through vision or audition. The book of Revelation offers a basis for hope in a world where God's way seems difficult to discern. It does this by unmasking the real significance of past, present and future. In addition, Revelation is described as prophecy. This is probably in line with the conviction that appears to have been widespread in early Christianity that the spirit of God had returned, a sign that the last day had arrived (a point stressed by the author of the Acts of the Apostles when he describes the events of the Day of Pentecost as a sign of the Last Days in Acts 2.17).

The visions of hope should be viewed not as some kind of aberration but as an authentic outworking of the central traditions of the biblical tradition. At the heart of its record of its self-understanding in the canon of the New Testament, Christianity chose in Jesus and Paul to recall instances of individuals with an understanding of the ultimate significance of their historical actions expressed to or linked with the apocalyptic tradition. Christian theology has been in part an attempt to articulate that basic apocalyptic datum. In the New Testament we have documents saturated with hope and the conviction that an apocalyptic insight of ultimate significance has been vouchsafed, which relativizes all other claims and also breathes the spirit of accommodation, domestication and stability. Apocalyptic has expressed a critical response to the injustices of the world, and opened eyes closed to realities that all too often have become accepted as the norm.

Apocalypses frequently include explanations of their imagery by means of an authoritative angelic interpreter. The book of Daniel functions in this way as also do parts of *4 Ezra* 11–13. Revelation by contrast differs from these in not having such a pattern of symbolic vision followed by prose interpretation. It is not an angelic monologue but a thoroughly symbolic vision (or series of visions) whose meaning is to be found in the words and symbols themselves rather than in an accompanying authoritative exposition of their true meaning. The revealed mystery comes through something that is in fact ambiguous and opaque. Just as in *4 Ezra* where the apocalyptic seer has revealed to him that he cannot understand the divine inscrutability, the means of knowing is couched consistently in Revelation in language and discourse whose syntax and vocabulary taxes the conventions of normality. John writes as an

outsider, an insignificant person in the face of the might of Rome. Yet he is the one who glimpses the mystery of God's purposes. The very strangeness of the imagery reminds the reader of the fact that God's ways are not humankind's ways and God's thoughts not their thoughts (Isaiah 40ff. and Job 40f.). Human wisdom, to paraphrase Paul, is stretched to its limit as 'normal' language seeks to bear witness to the mystery of God. With the book of Revelation we are brought into the world of apocalyptic mystery. Despite attempts over the years to play down the importance of this book the indications suggest that its thought-forms and outlook were more typical of early Christianity than is often allowed. The fact that we possess no visionary material elsewhere in the New Testament accounts for some of the differences, but they are superficial. Beneath the surface we have here convictions about God, Christ and the world that are not far removed from the so-called mainstream Christianity of the rest of the New Testament. In the earliest period of Christianity resort to the apocalyptic language and genre enabled the New Testament writers to have access to the privilege of understanding the significance of events and persons from the divine perspective. Apocalyptic, therefore, was the vehicle whereby the first Christians were able to articulate their deepest convictions about the ultimate significance of Jesus Christ in the divine economy.

NOTE

- 1 Unless stated otherwise, all Bible quotes are from the RSV.

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CHAPTER NINE

THE JEWISH NOVEL



Lawrence M. Wills

Although once neglected in biblical scholarship, the Jewish literature composed between the time of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament (including the Old Testament Apocrypha) has in recent decades come into its own.¹ From about 200 BCE on, there is a rich flowering of Jewish literature in genres that were greatly altered from their older counterparts: histories (1 and 2 Maccabees), apocalypses (1 *Enoch*; *Jubilees*), and wisdom (Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira; Wisdom of Solomon). However, one important group of texts constitutes a completely new genre: Jewish novels. The texts that we may include here among Jewish novels are Esther and Daniel – not in their form in the Hebrew Bible, but as they appear in the Apocrypha – Tobit and Judith (also found in the Apocrypha), and the later novel *Joseph and Aseneth*. Even where they make use of older motifs or allude to earlier biblical texts, they reflect new literary themes and techniques. Although there was no genre in ancient Judaism labeled ‘novel’ as such – nor was there such a label in use for the Greek and Roman novels – it is clear that throughout the Greek-controlled world, which by this time included most Jews, many ethnic groups were writing and reading entertaining narratives. From the texts themselves we may ascertain which group we would include in this category and why.

First, we must define what we mean by ‘novel.’ A novel is an entertaining prose narrative, written as opposed to oral (though the narrative may have begun as an oral tradition), which attains enough length to allow for the development of plot and subplot, description, dialogue, characterization, and the examination of thoughts and motives. Realism in description is often considered part of the essence of the modern novel, but in the ancient world it is present only in small amounts. More to the point is the inclusion of a strong emotional component, emotion that is reflected both in the storm and stress of the characters, and likely in the reading experience of the ancient audience as well.²

Contemporary also with the Jewish novels are writings that may be considered ‘novelistic,’ even if they are related to other genres or are simply not sufficiently developed to be considered novels in their own right. Artapanus in about 200 BCE wrote highly embellished accounts of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, which glorify the exploits of these early heroes of Jewish history. We may call these texts ‘national hero romances.’ Several historical works also created a more dramatic atmosphere in

addressing the recent past of Jewish history: 2 Maccabees, 3 Maccabees, and the so-called *Tobiad Romance* and *Royal Family of Adiabene* contained in Josephus's *Antiquities*, books 12 and 20. Although they have generally been regarded simply as bad history, they were perhaps intended as more engaging, even entertaining versions of important historical topics, and in this respect they are more novelistic than, say, 1 Maccabees. For instance, in 2 Maccabees 2:19–32 the author of that work states that the goals are different from documentary history, and tend more toward instructive entertainment. This understanding of the subgenre was likely carried on in the other Jewish historical novels as well, and also in the Christian Acts and apocryphal acts. In addition, other texts of the same period, which are not novels on the surface, have certain recognizable novelistic elements, such as *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Testament of Abraham*, and *Testament of Job*.³

The existence of these related genres or subgenres gives the impression of a morass of interrelated texts, in the midst of which it would be impossible to distinguish a single genre 'novel.' Indeed, the unclear boundaries of the ancient Jewish novels is both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, unlike the ancient Greek and Roman novels or the modern European novels, where we have a more clearly defined corpus, in the case of the Jewish novels the boundaries between the novel and other genres are not clear. Instead we find a number of texts that reflect experimentation with novelistic techniques and only a *gradual* approximation to what we would think of as the fully formed novel. The novel seems to come about slowly, as a result of innovations in the new medium of written entertainments intended for a class of wealthier Jews at home in the brave new world of Greek and Roman domination. However, this also represents a tremendous opportunity for the scholar to witness the origins and evolution of the novel at every stage of development, an opportunity that is not available in the case of the Greek and Roman novels.

The Jewish novels take their plot elements and motifs in some cases from older Hebrew Bible narratives, in some cases from legends and oral narrative traditions, and in other cases from Persian narrative traditions (Bickerman 1967, 1988; Wills 1990, 1995). They can also, like the ancient Greek novels, include fragments of other genres, whether pre-existing or artificially created to suit the particular literary context: Daniel and Esther are derived from court legends, Apocryphal Esther includes artificial apocalyptic visions and royal decrees, Judith begins with a dating formula typical of the biblical historical books, and *Joseph and Aseneth* begins and ends in a way similar to the Jewish national history romances of Artapanus. Still, it is the new 'package' of the novel that indicates the transformation of old motifs in a new genre.

As these novels took shape and grew and evolved, it is clear that they were not considered fixed narratives or sacred history. Although the canonization and the fixing of the texts of the Hebrew Bible proceeded slowly – Jeremiah, Proverbs, and Psalms, for example, were not transmitted in a fixed text until fairly late in the canonization process – the discrepancies in the texts and versions of the novels were even greater. All of the novels except Judith existed in multiple versions in the ancient world, suggesting that they were popular enough to be copied and altered often. These stories were evidently viewed as malleable entertainments that could be expanded and altered at every turn to address a new audience. Fragments found



Figure 9.1 Fragment of an unidentified novelistic work from Qumran (4Q550d).
Copyright Israel Antiquities Authority.

at Qumran even suggest that novelistic literature was copied on shorter scrolls with fewer lines (see Figure 9.1). J. T. Milik (1992: 363–5) refers to these novelistic scrolls as the ‘pocket editions of the ancient world.’ However, when they became part of sacred scripture, they were likely read in a different way, as edifying histories of important episodes of Jewish life.

The rise of the novel in the Greco-Roman world and in the Jewish world came about as a result of similar social changes.⁴ The conquests of Alexander the Great in 332 BCE had resulted in a new world order, and in time Greek education became standard for advancement in all the cities of the Near East. The advances in trade and economic interdependence in the eastern Mediterranean allowed for a new, ethnically mixed, entrepreneurial class, and Jews were well represented in this group. There are thus many similarities between the Jewish and Greco-Roman novels: the threat of chaos and destruction and the dramatic deliverance of the protagonists, the melodramatic tone and play upon the readers’ emotions, and the use of dialogue to explore the interior states of the characters. Still, the differences are equally important. Jewish novels apparently arose before the earliest Greek novelistic work.⁵ They are also shorter, more varied in their plot structures, and more primitive in their literary attainments. The Jewish novels do not generally involve the element of travel – although exotic foreign courts are featured – and the erotic attachments and the separation of lovers do not propel the plot forward. In the Greek novels, the breakdown of the older city-state social structures based on tribe, class, and extended family lay just beneath the surface, and as a result, the Greek novel focused on the conjugal couple, reunited at the end of the novel, as the newer model of the nuclear family. The Jewish novel, on the other hand, focused on the protagonists in relation to their *extended* family. The audience of the Jewish novel evidently felt very keenly the attractions of living in the Hellenistic diaspora, at the same time that fears of persecution or assimilation could be projected as threats to the safety of all Jews.

We may now turn to a brief consideration of each of the Jewish novels.

DANIEL

Daniel, as we have received it in the Jewish and Protestant canons, consists of narratives told in the third person about the wise courtier Daniel and his three companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 1–6), combined with apocalyptic visions of Daniel, recounted in the first person (Daniel 7–12). Because the latter chapters make reference to events of the Maccabean Revolt (167–64 BCE), they are dated to that period, but the narratives of Daniel 1–6 do not refer to these hostilities, and seem to reflect the period prior to the Maccabean Revolt (Collins 1977: 33–59; Wills 1990: 75–152; Humphreys 1973). The book of Daniel probably originated, then, as a collection of originally independent oral narratives from about the fourth – third centuries BCE, which were collected and committed to writing. The earliest collection may have been limited to Daniel 4–6, but at any rate Daniel 1–6 probably also circulated as a collection from the period before the Maccabean Revolt. Although the individual narratives, which contained elements of danger, escape, and humor, already contained the seeds of novelistic interest, they were by themselves not novelistic. However, the mere collection of the stories signals a move in a new direction, placing all the stories of Daniel into one ‘book.’



Figure 9.2 *Susanna and the Elders*, Rembrandt (1647), Berlin, Staatliche Museen.
Copyright Fotomarburbg/Art Resource, New York.

The addition of the apocalyptic visions of Daniel 7–12 constitutes a development that was not novelistic – it was an application of the Daniel tradition to the specific issues of the crisis of the Maccabean Revolt – but soon thereafter other chapters were added that explore various novelistic motifs. Susanna depicts a threat to the virtue of a beautiful young woman by unscrupulous elders, the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews gives voice to an inner, psychologizing penance of pious Jews, and Bel and The Dragon extends the theme of piety and danger begun already in Daniel 1–6. Here we see another important step toward expanding the book to create a new art form, and it is the addition of Susanna that is most instructive. A woman character, placed in danger and contemplating her own moral position, whose experience and point of view are rendered for the audience, is at the center of this story, and it is equally important that the social setting is no longer the royal court, and the worldwide body of Jews is not the issue. The new setting is a local, domestic setting, where an individual person faces problems that are played out within the family. This is the essence of the novel. The novelistic – and erotic – interest in the depiction of Susanna has been followed by many visual representations of her throughout history (see [Figure 9.2](#); Miles 1989: 121–25).

ESTHER

Like Daniel, Esther may have evolved from an oral court legend influenced by Persian tradition (Bickerman 1967: 182–4). The version found in the Hebrew Bible is already somewhat novelistic, but it is perhaps best to consider it transitional to the novels that follow. At the core is a plot that focuses on the two Jews Esther and Mordecai, and the drama that surrounds them (and by extension, all the Jews of Persia), played out in the court of the great Persian king Ahasuerus (Xerxes). But already this court legend reflects the experimentation characteristic of novels: the plot and subplot of Esther and Mordecai – which is plot and which subplot? – the grandiose descriptions of the court settings, and especially the dialogue and examination of Esther's inner turmoil in [chapter 4](#) as she must decide at Mordecai's behest whether to identify as a Jew and try to save her people. This last element is intriguing because Esther seems to change and develop as a character, moving beyond the self-centered complacency of one who is comfortable and in denial to the more self-actualized status of one who recognizes her responsibility to her fellow-Jews and decides to act upon it, even at the risk of her own life (Berg 1979: 173–87; Fox 1991). Although it is often said that character change and development were only discovered in the modern novel, it seems that they are met with here as well, perhaps for the first time.

The version of Esther in the Hebrew Bible may already show signs of having been composed of several older narrative traditions, but when we turn to the later versions – two Greek, two Latin, and two Aramaic – we witness what must have been typical of novelistic literature: free and experimental change and development of novelistic motifs. We shall focus here on the Greek version that became semi-canonical as part of the Old Testament Apocrypha. There Esther is embellished by the addition of six significant expansions that add excitement (visions of the coming conflict placed at the beginning), exploration of interiorizing emotions (Mordecai's and Esther's prayers and inner turmoil), and dramatic detail (the text of the king's two decrees,

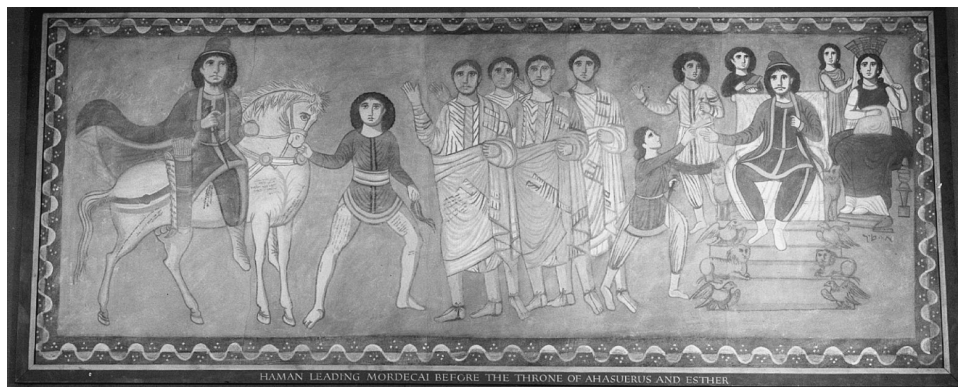


Figure 9.3 Haman leading Mordecai before the throne of Ahasuerus and Esther.
Copyright Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection.

lacking in the earlier version of Esther). Although the additions sometimes mimic earlier literary forms, they are here thoroughly ‘novelized’; that is, they are written to be dramatic within the narrative context and to advance the plot. Mordecai’s dream, for instance, is meant to sound like an apocalyptic vision, but it is concerned only with the upcoming events of the story and not with the events at the end of time; it merely heightens the sense that an ominous conflict is about to take place. (Greek novels, it should be noted, also feature premonitory dreams and oracles.) Likewise Esther’s prayer and the two royal decrees explain important psychological issues and motivations, and add a much richer texture to the story. Perhaps nowhere are the novelistic changes more in evidence than in the entrance of Esther into the king’s court:

When she had gone through all the doors, she stood before the king. He was seated on his royal throne, clothed in the full array of his majesty, all covered with gold and precious stones. He was most terrifying. Lifting his face, flushed with splendor, he looked at her in fierce anger. The queen faltered, turned pale and faint, and collapsed on the head of the maid who went in front of her.

(15:6–7 NRSV)

Hebrew Esther has been transformed here into a romance, with description quite similar to the Greek novels.

The synagogue painting of Esther and Mordecai found at Dura Europos (dated about 250 CE; see [Figure 9.3](#)) indicates the importance this story had achieved, and as in the various renditions of the narrative, Mordecai and Esther vie for the position of greater importance. In the painting, Mordecai commands the central position, and Esther remains a ‘power behind the throne.’

TOBIT

The book of Tobit is a charming and spirited tale that recounts the intertwined experiences of two protagonists: Tobit, a pious Jew who is 'rewarded' by God with blindness, and Sarah, his distant cousin, whose seven fiancés have been slain on their wedding nights by the evil demon Asmodaeus. Tobit and Sarah, though unknown to each other and separated by many miles, pray at the same time for God to end their misery by taking their lives. The goodness and piety of these central characters are emphasized, and God has a secret means of delivering them from their problems: the angel Raphael is dispatched to resolve their difficulties, and by doing so draws the two plotlines together. Preparing for death, Tobit sends his son Tobias to a distant city to retrieve a huge sum of money placed on deposit there many years earlier. The angel Raphael appears in the guise of a mortal to act as a guide, and on the journey gives Tobias the means to bind Asmodaeus and take Sarah in marriage. Tobias returns to Tobit with both bride and money, and also produces another healing agent that Raphael had given him to cure Tobit's blindness. There is much rejoicing at the end, as the main characters celebrate their good fortune and Raphael reveals his identity to them.

The magical tone in Tobit may seem somewhat at odds with its status as a semi-canonical biblical book. It has been read as a pious and uplifting account of God's protection of virtuous people, but it may have been originally composed with a deliberate whimsy, to entertain a well-to-do Jewish audience with marriage on its mind. At any rate, unlike Daniel and Esther, the source of the story does not lie in the court legend tradition, but in common folktale motifs – the spirit that rewards a person for burying the dead, the magical healing agents that are found in a fish, the binding of the evil demon, even the dog that accompanies Tobias on his journey – all of these motifs are found in folktales from around the world (Zimmermann 1958: 5–12; Wills 1995: 73–6). Still, the parallels to oral tales do not preclude a novelistic composition, and that is evidently what we find in Tobit. It is interesting that here as well several different versions of Tobit circulated in the ancient world.

JUDITH

The book of Judith is in many ways different from the Jewish novels described so far, and these differences are in part explained by the fact that Judith was probably composed from the first as a novel, and not derived from an older narrative. Judith is longer than Daniel, Esther, and Tobit, but surprisingly, is much less dependent upon a complicated plot and subplot. It is more of an artful and elongated development of a single literary movement: the evil general Holofernes arises on the horizon to threaten the Jews, and is cut down in a moment of weakness by the beautiful Jewish widow Judith. Despite the simplicity of this plotline, *how* all this comes about, and *what* it means occupy the interest of the author and audience. The rising action, denouement, and falling action are more clearly developed in this novel than in any of the others, through a clever structuring of the dramatic scenes (Craven 1983). Judith consists of two main acts, the rising threat of Holofernes (chs 1–7),

and the response of the Jews (8–16). In each half phrases and motifs are found that are paralleled or reversed in the other half, giving rise to two countervailing propositions: Holofernes is the servant of his lord Nebuchadnezzar, and Judith is the servant of her Lord God. The battle is a struggle to see which lord, working through his servant, will prevail, and by what means.

There is a certain literary pleasure that is evident in both halves. The buildup of Holofernes's forces and the alliances that are formed create a vivid picture of a world at war. The geographical sweep (1:7–10; 2:21–7) impresses the reader with the



Figure 9.4 Two views of Judith and Holofernes. (a) *above* Statue by Donatello (c. 1386–1466), Piazza della Signoria, Florence. Copyright Alinari/Art Resource, New York. (b) *opposite* Painting by Caravaggio. Copyright Nimatallah/Art Resource, New York.

tremendous stakes and the might of the advancing Assyrian army. Formerly neutral parties take sides (3:7–8), and the fully marshalled troops of Holofernes strike fear into the Jews when they are all amassed at the foot of the pass where Bethulia lies (7:1–5). Just before Holofernes reaches that point, however, there is a pause in the narrative as a new character is introduced: Achior the Ammonite. He describes to General Holofernes just who the Jews are, and in doing so presents the side of God in this morality play (ch. 6). Holofernes is incensed, and has Achior bound and dumped at the edge of Bethulia, there to die with the Jews Achior has just described so positively. The first half thus ends with Achior left in the same uncertain state as the Jews of Bethulia. When the second half begins, the male leaders of Bethulia are on the verge of capitulating to Holofernes's demands. It is only Judith, the beautiful, pious, and wealthy widow of Manasseh, who steps forward to upbraid the weak-willed citizens. She argues that God will not abandon the Jews, and then sets out on a plan to deliver them. Accompanied only by her maidservant, she proceeds down the mountainside to the Assyrian camp, and when at night Holofernes invites her into his tent, she leads him on until he becomes drunk, and then decapitates him, places his head in her food pouch, and sneaks back to her village. The next day, the Jews, with the head of Holofernes displayed before them, attack and rout the Assyrians in fear.

The story is told with a deft touch of irony throughout. When Holofernes orders that Achior be exiled to Bethulia, he tells him, 'You shall not see my face again until I take revenge on this race' (6:5, my trans.). The audience will later find that



Achior does see Holofernes's face again, when Judith pulls it from her pouch. When Judith is before Holofernes, she also engages in a banter that is very humorous. She promises Holofernes, 'If you follow the words of your servant, God will accomplish something through you, and my lord will not fail to achieve his purpose' (11:6, my trans.). The audience, of course, knows that when Judith mentions 'my lord,' she is secretly intending a reference to God, while Holofernes assumes it is a reference to him. This ironic humor, together with the careful balancing of both halves of the story, indicate a more assured novelistic technique than in the other Jewish novels, a technique that will allow the extension of the narrative in a way more sophisticated than the mere insertion of unintegrated episodes and subplots, as was the case in Daniel, Esther, and Tobit.

It is also interesting that the ancient text does not reveal any ambivalence about Judith's actions – her lying, her sexual provocativeness, her nerveless decapitation of Holofernes – even though she is viewed with great suspicion in the modern world, beginning with paintings of the seventeenth century, where she is often depicted with strong psychological undertones. For example, the 'classical' triumphant Judith by Donatello (c.1455; see [Figure 9.4a](#)) can be contrasted with the intensely troubling painting by Michelangelo Caravaggio (1599; see [Figure 9.4b](#); Jacobus 1986: 110–36).

JOSEPH AND ASENETH

Joseph and Aseneth is the longest of the novels considered here. It combines danger and adventure with an evolving romance (often understood in an ascetic manner), and emphasizes the inner psychological turmoil of the vulnerable heroine. Taking its inspiration from a verse in Genesis (41:45) that states that Joseph was given Aseneth, daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, in marriage, this novel fills in the gaps of that story. It begins by describing how the haughty Egyptian Aseneth is so struck by Joseph's appearance that she renounces the attentions of the Pharaoh's son and falls hopelessly in love with Joseph. She has never slept with a man – in fact, she has never even been seen by a man! – but immediately upon catching a glimpse of Joseph, falls madly in love. She is smitten with the same lovesickness that is so typical of the Greek novels, but Joseph will have none of her advances. He had been badly treated in his encounter with Potiphar's wife, and chooses not to take up with a Gentile woman. He departs temporarily, allowing for Aseneth's wrenching self-examination and conversion. She repents of the sins of idols and luxury, and purifying herself through an ascetic practice of fasting and penance, renounces her pagan past and becomes Jewish through a mystical encounter with a 'man from heaven.' Afterward, however, Joseph's half-brothers (sons of the maidservants Bilhah and Zilpah) conspire with the jilted son of the Pharaoh to try to kill Joseph, and it is up to Aseneth to intercede. With the aid of Joseph's brothers Levi and Benjamin, Aseneth foils the plot, and Pharaoh's son is accidentally killed in the process. The Pharaoh also dies of grief, but Joseph comes to rule Egypt in his stead.

In some ways, *Joseph and Aseneth* represents the culmination of the process of novelistic development in ancient Judaism. The emphasis on the female protagonist, present to some extent in all the other Jewish novels, here reaches its apex. Joseph

is important at the beginning, but soon the audience's entire interest is focused on the inner turmoil of Aseneth. Whether this text addresses the actual concerns of people who converted to Judaism (Chesnutt 1995; Kee 1983) or simply uses the conversion subplot as a metaphor for other issues is not clear. In addition, it is sometimes suggested that Christian motifs can be found in the novel, and that it may have been written several centuries after the other novels (Kraemer 1992: 110–12). It would, in that case, still be useful as a comparison point, but not as a window into the Jewish social world of the period of the Bible.

CONCLUSION

Having described each of the five known Jewish novels, we may now turn to a fascinating and controversial question. Granting that the novels utilized novelistic techniques, were they, like other novels, also read as fictions, that is, were they understood by both author and audience as an experiment in narration that does not recount actual events? The answer is not clear. Each of the novels contains a historical blunder that seems to signal an intentional abandonment of anything resembling history: Daniel 5:31 refers to 'Darius the Mede' (Darius was king of Persia), Esther describes a Jewish queen of Persia (there was never a Jewish queen of Persia), Tobit 14:15 refers to 'Ahasuerus of Media' (Ahasuerus, or Xerxes, was king of Persia), Judith takes place during the reign of 'Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians' (Nebuchadnezzar was king of the Babylonians), and *Joseph and Aseneth* concludes with Joseph as viceregent of Egypt (Joseph, according to the biblical text, was never viceregent of Egypt). These are all historical inaccuracies so egregious that it is scarcely possible that the audience would have believed them. On the other hand, the pious nature of the writings indicates that the characters were at least seen as moral exemplars for the readers, and it appears that soon after their composition some of the texts were treated as factual accounts by historians such as Josephus. What seems more to the point, however, is the experimentation with unreal worlds and unreal figures found in these novels, and the playful way in which 'history' can be rewritten in a triumphant way. The audience may not have been making a clear distinction between fact and fiction, but were perhaps inhabiting the gray world of experimentation. The same may have been true in the case of the Greek literature that paved the way for the novels in that culture, such as Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* or Pseudo-Callisthenes's *Alexander Romance*. It is not always easy to determine what is *fiction* and what is understood as 'bad history.' Fiction was evidently scorned by some intellectuals in the ancient world because it seemed like an affront to 'truth-telling,' but the Jewish novels discussed here seem to begin by experimenting with the idea of fictitious characters and events, and grow more novelistic by exploiting the techniques outlined above.

The Jewish novels hold a very important place in the religious life of a wealthy class of Jews, and provide us with a window into the world of their values and ideas. The romantic interest is sometimes present, but always tied to the demands of the extended family and to the body of Jews in general, and these remain as demands upon the reader from beginning to end. The penitential aspect of the texts is also inescapable, revealing an interiorizing psychology that is often quite intense. Penance

had become a strongly emphasized aspect of Jewish spirituality in the ancient world (Nehemiah 9; Baruch 1), and here we find this spirituality 'narrativized.' Although it is the woman character who lives through the most intense penitential self-examination, it is likely both the male and female members of the audience who see themselves in her purification. This process in the narrative seems closely akin to asceticism, and may be a transitional stage to the asceticism that was practiced in early Christianity, and which is reflected in the historical novels known as the Christian apocryphal acts.

NOTES

- 1 Two recent works that introduce most of these texts are Nickelsburg 1981 and Collins 1982. In addition to the Apocrypha, which are now printed in most study Bibles, the English translations of the other Jewish texts are readily available in Charlesworth 1985.
- 2 The definition of the novel used here, and the discussion in general, was first presented in Wills 1995.
- 3 On *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, see Bickerman 1988: 210; on *Testament of Abraham*, Wills 1995: 245–56; and on *Testament of Job*, Levine 1997: 351.
- 4 See Wills 1995: 1–39 on the Jewish novel; and on the Greek novel, Perry 1967; Reardon 1991; and Holzberg 1995.
- 5 The earliest known fragment of a Greek novel has been dated to the first century BCE. To be sure, the Jewish novels probably did not influence the Greek novels directly; they are instead similar to the popular prose narratives that were appearing among different ethnic groups in the Greco-Roman world. The *Ninus Romance* was probably read by native Syrians, *Sesonchosis* and *Petubastis* among Egyptians, the *Alexander Romance* among Hellenized Egyptians, and so on. These are similar to the Jewish 'national hero romance' by Artapanus.

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CHAPTER TEN

THE GOSPELS



John Muddiman

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE AND THE GOSPELS

In the biblical world itself, in contrast to the post-biblical world of later interpretation, the word ‘gospel’ (Greek *euangelion*) does not denote a type of literature, namely the four texts that make up the first half of the New Testament, but the proclamation of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

In classical Greek the singular noun is rare and is used technically in reference to the payment made to someone who brings glad tidings; the more normal term to refer to the content of the message is, as in English, the plural, ‘good news’ (*euangelia*). This typically denotes the announcement of some cause for *public* rejoicing, like a victory in battle or the birth of an heir to the throne. The impoverished under-classes of the Roman Empire probably did not greet such announcements of ‘good news’ with any great enthusiasm, for they would have served only to reinforce the old world order. In a lively linguistic innovation, Paul or some other early Christian used ‘gospel’ in the singular to refer to the contents of the only genuinely good news. Building on the use of the verb in the Old Testament (e.g. Isa. 40.9; 52.7; 61.1), he coined this semi-technical term to sum up the heart of a world-changing and subversive message of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish prophet believed to be Messiah and Son of God, and expected to return soon to raise the dead and establish a reign of justice for the poor.

The cross of Jesus was good news because it was not what it appeared to be, the torture and humiliation of yet another victim of Roman state terrorism. It was rather the sacrifice that paid the price of sin, ordained of God and fulfilling scriptural prophecy. It was good news because believers could enter into this event by a leap of spiritual and ethical imagination, made visible and concrete in the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, and die to their old selves (or even be ‘crucified with’ Christ, Gal. 2.19). Above all, it was good news because it was the moment when a dramatic shift in the timetable of universal history had occurred, for on the third day God raised him from the dead. Similarly, the resurrection of Jesus was not what it at first appeared to be, a freak phenomenon of physical resuscitation or wish-fulfilment on the part of his demoralized followers; it was good news because the end-time hope of a new world had been anticipated and guaranteed in one representative instance,

and the risen Christ who had thus been designated to come again soon to judge the world was also the one who, as the Wisdom of God, created the world in the first place, and is the explanation of all that happens in salvation-history between the beginning and the end. All of this is what 'gospel' meant for Paul and arguably it is still what the word means for the writers of what we call the Synoptic Gospels, when they occasionally use it (e.g. Matt. 26.13; Mark 1.15; Luke 9.6).

In New Testament scholarship, the early Christian message of salvation outlined in the previous paragraph is normally referred to as the *kerygma* (the Greek word for 'proclamation'), in order to avoid any confusion with the literary category of 'gospel'. It is a matter of continuing scholarly dispute whether and to what extent a distinction needs to be made between the Pauline *kerygma* and other early *kerygmata*. We are entirely dependent for direct knowledge of the first three decades of Christian history on the authentic letters of Paul, and so we do not know whether his way of presenting the gospel to mainly Gentile audiences, with hardly any use of the sayings of Jesus (only certainly 1 Cor. 11.23–5) and no reference to any incident prior to his passion, was typical of the movement as a whole. If it was, interest in the life-story of Jesus as a medium through which to proclaim the good news may have developed only in the second, post-Pauline, generation. But it is perhaps more likely that other early missionaries would have appealed more often to Jesus' life and teaching than Paul does in his letters, although, as Paul himself says (see Gal. 2.7), all agreed on the basic content of the gospel. There is no evidence (*pace* Crossan 1999: 239–56, and others, e.g. Koester 1990) that a very different kind of early *kerygma*, which focused exclusively on Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom, existed alongside and in competition with the gospel of the cross and resurrection. The hypothetical Q sayings source presupposes (see the lament over Jerusalem, Luke 13.34–5 and par.) the rejection, and indeed vindication, of Jesus in the line of Israel's prophets. Only by a highly tendentious process of selection and isolation of certain Q traditions and by equally speculative claims about the antiquity and significance of the so-called *Gospel of Thomas* can such a dichotomy between two types of early Christianity be sustained.

How, then, are we to explain the development from Paul's gospel to what the New Testament Gospels contain? There is clearly a move away from the existential and universal and towards the historical and particular, and thus towards the very *Jewish* detail of the life of Jesus. Various explanations of this move are possible: the influx of non-Jews into the Church may have made it necessary to be more explicit about the Jewish matrix of Christian belief in Jesus as God's Messiah; delay in the expected Parousia may have led to a greater consciousness of the movement's continuing existence over time and the consequent need to establish its identity by a recovery of origins; devotion to the heavenly Saviour may have become so strong in Christian spirituality that doubts were beginning to be raised (cf. 1 John 4.2) about his identification with the one who was 'born of a woman' and 'suffered under Pontius Pilate'. In addition to such general stimuli towards the writing of the Gospels, each of them is probably also responding to particular needs and circumstances.

The construction of life-stories of Jesus creates at first an epistemological distance between reader and the central figure in the narrative; the lordship of Christ as the object of faith is no longer being apprehended directly, but indirectly through the

medium of authoritative tradition. The four evangelists seem to be aware of this danger and adopt different strategies to cope with it. But the common purpose of the New Testament Gospels is to express through the form of a selective story about Jesus, dealing mainly with his public career and its final week, an urgent summons to believe in him as Christ and Son of God. The focus on the person and life of Jesus arises, then, not so much from biographical curiosity, as from the basic religious commitment of early Christians that 'in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself' (2 Cor. 5.19).

The four Gospels were produced by Greek-speaking Christians probably in the eastern Mediterranean during the last third of the first century. Attempts to claim that Matthew and John are translations of underlying Aramaic texts or that Mark was first composed in Latin are generally now considered unconvincing. While some still argue for a western provenance for Mark or Luke (i.e. Rome), the trend in recent scholarship has been to locate them all in Christian communities in Syria, Asia Minor or Greece, such as Antioch, Ephesus or Corinth, which were the historic centres of the Pauline mission field. The surprising neglect of the Jesus tradition in Paul's own letters, noted above, implies that the Gospels themselves, if not their narrative style of proclaiming the good news, appeared only after his day, and the allusions in each to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Mark 13.2; Matt. 22.7; Luke 19.13; John 2.19) confirm a dating near or sometime after that event.

The literary relations between the Gospels provides some information about their relative chronology: Mark was probably the first and was used as the basis for Matthew and Luke. John's Gospel, preserving a largely independent stream of tradition, may reflect knowledge of the Synoptics at the latest stage of its editing, for it appears to have been re-edited after the death of its original author (21.24). The earliest patristic citations and manuscript evidence on papyrus put the *terminus ante quem* for the gospels at around 110 CE.

The titles of the Gospels, 'According to Mark', and so on, distinguishing them by named apostles or co-workers of apostles, are almost certainly later additions and not to be relied on (*pace* Hengel 2000). They could not have been added before the word 'gospel' had come to denote a type of literature, and that did not happen before the mid-second century, when it became clear that the Church needed to authenticate its traditional books, over against more recent products, by attaching to them explicit claims to apostolic authorship. The original works we know as the New Testament Gospels are themselves anonymous and deliberately so: for their authors to have identified themselves would have been an inappropriate claim to 'copyright' over what was essentially the common property of Christian communities.

WHAT IS A GOSPEL?

An answer to this question has been implied above, in terms of the contents and function of the books so designated in the New Testament. Many scholars would consider this to be a sufficient answer. The more precise question of their literary type or *genre* seems to be irrelevant, for it implies too high an estimate of the literary pretensions of their authors and the literary competence of their audiences. The New Testament Gospels are not 'high literature', so we should not expect them to fit into

the conventional classifications familiar to the leisured and cultured élite of Graeco-Roman society.

If we define genre less strictly as a certain set of expectations that readers bring to any particular text based on their previous acquaintance with literature of a similar type, then the generic problem as regards the Gospels can be summed up in the following way. There is nothing to show that the intended readers of the Gospels were acquainted with any literature other than the Jewish scriptures (and this is probably true of their authors too, with the possible exception of Luke, see Acts 17.28), and there is very little in Jewish scripture that is sufficiently similar to the Gospels to explain how their first readers would have received them. The Old Testament contains no proper example of biography. The tales of Abraham, Moses, David and Elijah in Jewish scripture are not told continuously or for their own sakes; the episodes that are selected are subordinated to a larger plot, telling the life-story of God with his people, Israel; there is no attempt to analyse character as the key to the events in the story. There are some partial parallels between the Gospels and prophetic histories like the Elijah–Elisha cycle in Kings (1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 13), with apocalyptic history, like the book of Daniel, or with a novel like Tobit, but they are insufficient to explain the large-scale structures, tone or purpose of the Christian texts.

One broad description of the Gospels as ‘passion narratives with extended introductions’ has often been quoted since it was formulated by the neo-Lutheran systematician, Martin Kähler, in 1882 (1964: 80 n.). It was endorsed, in particular, by the form-critics who understood the Gospels to have developed backwards from their passion narratives, where their similarity to each other is most pronounced. The ‘remembering of the Lord’s death until he comes’ (1 Cor. 11.23) or the graphic portrayal of Christ crucified (Gal. 3.1; 1 Cor. 1.23) was the centre of the *kerygma*, and other material was added simply to explain how and why the story ends the way it does. There is still much to be said in favour of this view, especially in regard to Mark and John. For in both cases, the coming passion overshadows the story from the beginning. At John 1.29 already Jesus is announced as the ‘Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world’ and, after a series of minor clashes with opponents, already at Mark 3.6 they are plotting Jesus’ death. However, this definition fails to do justice to the movement in the other direction, not simply from the passion backwards but also from salvation-history forwards towards its fulfilment. The latter emphasis is clearest in Matthew and Luke, but it is not absent from the other two. Furthermore, the messages about the Kingdom in the Synoptics or, in the Fourth Gospel, about eternal life through faith in the Word incarnate, are not properly understood as introductory elements but are separate themes and can in a certain sense be appreciated apart from the passion narrative.

Recent investigations into the Hellenistic background of the New Testament have revived the attempt to classify the Gospels as ‘ancient popular biography’ (see Talbert 1977; BurrIDGE 1991). As a descriptive category there can be no objection to calling the Gospels biography; modern literary historians are free to group similar writings together as they see fit. But as a prescriptive category there are several problems with this classification. Ancient works that have ‘life’ (*bios*) in their title are usually about some great figure from the past and they pretend (at least) to be objective

(Plutarch; Diogenes Laertius). But works about contemporaries or near contemporaries that are really eulogies in narrative form are not normally called 'lives'. Furthermore, the Gospel-writers pass over in silence the 'formative years' of their subject and apart from the incident in the Temple when Jesus was twelve (Luke 2.41–51) include no premonitions of greatness to come. The teaching of Jesus in the Synoptics is not principally intended to illustrate the character of the teacher but the character of the Kingdom whose coming he announces. The sharp contrast between the miraculous acts of power in the ministry and the utter powerlessness of the passion is left unresolved even by the resurrection stories. Certainly the Gospels aim to achieve the strong personal attachment of the audience to their central figure, but it is an attachment that is wider and deeper than the admiration evoked by biography. Some of their more educated readers no doubt recognized certain similarities between the Church's Gospels and the biographies they knew, but the evangelists and the audience for whom they initially wrote would probably not have made any connection.

When Justin Martyr in the mid-second century (Apology 106) wanted a literary classification in which to place the Gospels he called them the 'memorabilia' of the apostles (Greek *apomnēmoneumata*, like Xenophon's classic of that title), a term that emphasizes the privileged vantage point of the authors as witnesses, rather than the nature of their subject matter.

Several other attempts have been made to connect the Gospels with types of hellenistic literature in pure or mixed forms: memorabilia mixed with elements of Jewish prophecy (so Robbins 1984), aretalogy (so Hadas and Smith 1965) and tragedy (so Bilezikian 1992). These throw some light on certain aspects of the Gospels but leave others unexplained. More recently, Mary Ann Tolbert (1989: 44) has proposed that we should look for parallels to Mark's Gospel lower down the aesthetic scale of Hellenistic literature and she points to several similarities between Mark and popular romantic novels (ibid. 75). Self-evidently, the Gospels are not themselves romances, but their odd mixture of historiographical form with epic and dramatic substance, their loose episodic plots with summaries and fore-shadowings and stock characters, point to a *subliterary* oral genre, which has, unusually in the case of the Gospels, been preserved in writing, while most other examples of it, naturally enough, have disappeared.

In short, there is no simple answer to the question of genre. Just as Paul developed the letter-form to become a vehicle for preaching and moral exhortation, so also the writers of the Gospels used storytelling for their own kerygmatic and didactic purposes. It would be too much to say that they invented a wholly new genre: or at least it was not apparent that they had done so, until the four books were put together with a standard title in the Church's canon of scripture. Before then, it is more appropriate to look at each of the books separately and ask about the structure, contents, mood and purpose of each. Attentive listeners, acquainted with the discourse of early Christian groups, would not need to know what type of literature this was; they could pick up the thread as they went along.

MARK

Mark's Gospel is generally reckoned to be the earliest of the four. Since it is almost entirely reproduced in one or both of the other Synoptics, there would be little point in its composition if it came later. Its supposed priority has made it the object of intense scholarly interest and debate over the last 150 years.

At first, it was hoped that Mark, as the earliest Gospel, would provide a 'royal road' to the historical Jesus, what lawyers would call a good witness: accurate, detailed, and none too bright. This is implied in the earliest patristic testimony about the origins of the Gospels. Papias, writing about 125 CE (his remarks are preserved by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15), retails the opinion of the 'presbyter' that 'Mark, indeed, who became the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately, as far as he remembered them, the things said or done by the Lord, but not however in order'. Papias goes on to explain that the lack of order (presumably in comparison with Matthew's tidy rearrangement) was due to Peter's practice of adapting his preaching 'to suit the needs of the moment'; but he insists that Mark's book was, nevertheless, a full and accurate record of what Peter used to say.

This defence of the apostolicity and accuracy of Mark does not stand up to closer scrutiny. Already, at the turn of the twentieth century, William Wrede argued that one of Mark's most typical features, the so-called messianic secret, was not the result of historical reminiscence – that is to say, it did not reflect a policy on the part of Jesus during his lifetime to keep his messiahship a secret – but was a secondary theological motif, which showed that this Gospel was no less a product of post-Easter Christian beliefs than the others. The secrecy theme comprises all or some of the following: the command to disciples not to reveal Jesus' identity (8.30) until after his resurrection (9.9), the silencing of demons who have supernatural knowledge of Jesus as Son of God (3.12), the ban placed on the disclosure of (some of) Jesus' miracles (e.g. 5.43), the allegorical form of Jesus' parables understood as a deliberate attempt to prevent the crowds from understanding the secret (Mark 4.10–12). Putting all this material together, the conclusion seemed unavoidable: the secrecy theme was a way of accommodating the (Pauline) understanding of the gospel of the death and resurrection within the framework of a story about Jesus, in other words of delaying the climactic moment of revelation till the end of the book. For Christ cannot truly be known simply 'after the flesh' (cf. 2 Cor. 5.21): one can only know him truly as the crucified and risen one.

Mark figured prominently in the next most important development in gospel study, the rise of form-criticism (see esp. Bultmann 1921; Dibelius 1933). The lack of order in his account of the ministry of Jesus, already noticed by Papias's presbyter, the general absence of indications of time and place, the breathless haste and the compression of the narrative, with a brief Galilean ministry, one journey to Jerusalem, and then the trial and passion, were due to the writer's imposition of a rather simplified storyline upon a diverse stock of separate, independently circulating oral traditions. Close inspection of these revealed that they fall into a limited number of stereotypes – miracles, conflict dialogues, sayings, parables, and so forth. Mark's Gospel was dismantled, like the Jerusalem Temple, so that no stone was left standing on another. Apart from the messianic secret, the evangelist was viewed as a mere

scribe and compiler of community traditions, hardly worthy to be called an author in the true sense. Of course while dismembering the author, this approach also ‘remembered’ the lived experience in all its variety of early Christian communities: it seemed a small price to pay.

Doubts about the ability of form-criticism to explain the total phenomenon of Mark were already being expressed by R. H. Lightfoot when he introduced the English-speaking public to the method in his Bampton Lectures of 1934. The order of paragraphs in the account of the ministry was not as haphazard or arbitrary as it might appear. The writer had juxtaposed incidents or enfolded one within another in such a way that they interpret each other (see e.g. the cleansing of the Temple, sandwiched between the cursing and withering of the fig tree, Mark 11.12–21). There was clearly an individual mind at work, even if he was constrained to stay within the limits of the traditional way of recounting the ‘things concerning Jesus’. It was almost inevitable that, as scholars ran out of things to say about the history of traditions before Mark, their attention should be drawn back to the editing or ‘redaction’ of them. But what started as a supplement to the earlier approach soon became its competitor, disputing the origins of much of the contents of the Gospel. Eventually, this rivalry would lead to the erosion of the very distinction between tradition and redaction on which the competing methods both depended.

Early redaction-criticism was no less a ‘sociological’ method than form-criticism. It agreed that the Gospels were not *belles-lettres* to entertain and inform an educated audience but expressions of the living faith of a community. It differed in its determination to throw light on Mark’s own community and its concerns as the controlling factors in the composition of the Gospel. For example the Little Apocalypse (chapter 13) had formerly been treated as a kind of ‘fossil’ representing an earlier crisis of persecution and expectation for imminent rescue by the coming of the Son of Man. But redaction-criticism saw it instead as a ‘window’ into the contemporary experience of Mark’s church. The genre of Mark as a whole (and not just ch. 13) could be described as ‘apocalypse mediated through narrative’: its focus was still on the imminent future. In other words, Mark was not historicizing the *kerygma* by writing down a story about the past: he was kerygmatising history in the light of its fast-approaching end. The Markan community was attempting to make sense of its external situation of persecution and suffering, whether in Rome under Nero – the traditional setting – or in Palestine during the Revolt of 66–70 CE (Marxsen 1956), by appeal to the Jewish model of the eschatological tribulation of the saints as a sign that the cosmic struggle between good and evil was about to reach its climax (Robinson 1957).

As redaction-criticism developed, however, it began to concentrate more on what might have been happening within the community. The change in perspective from external to internal factors as determinative for the selection and editing of the Church’s traditions about Jesus is noteworthy. It arises from the observation, largely correct, that early Christian groups, as evidenced by Paul’s epistles, seem to have been oblivious to the politics of the time in which they lived (Rom. 13.1–7 was, for instance, written when Nero sat on the imperial throne!), and obsessed with inner-church controversy. The starting point for the new approach was the peculiarly negative portrayal of the disciples in Mark (Tyson 1961), taken as indicating

an internal theological conflict within his community (Weeden 1971). For, the disciples in the text represent not model Christians, as one might have expected, but increasingly blind and arrogant opponents of Jesus' (and thus the evangelist's) teaching on the necessity of suffering. The conflict between Jesus and the disciples is understood as an inner-church theological conflict between miracle-working power and the way of the cross. Paul's argument with false apostles, especially in 2 Corinthians 10–13, provides the template for this reconstruction. The Gospel of Mark is a thinly veiled reflection of a similar dispute within the Church, and its genre is, in effect, that of 'a controversial treatise on Christology', and, when competently decoded, everything can be seen to be directly relevant to it.

But is this at all plausible? Why does Mark include so many miracle stories, and summaries of others, if they contribute nothing to a proper understanding of Christ, and lead only to misunderstanding? And why does Mark attribute deviant views to Peter, James and John, whose authority it would be surely impossible, by the time he was writing, to contradict, and not to someone like Judas who would deserve any calumny heaped upon him? One of the methodological consequences of the redaction-critical determination to provide a total explanation of the Gospel by reference to the theological outlook and contemporary setting of the evangelist is that it becomes unnecessary to make any distinction between tradition and redaction.

This has given rise in more recent scholarship to 'holistic' readings of the Gospel of two rather different kinds. Narrative criticism (see Rhoads and Michie 1982; Fowler 1991) has insisted upon the significance of story as the generic category that most obviously fits the Gospel, and applied to it the literary-critical techniques that are appropriate to this genre: synchronic attention to the narrative as a whole; the narrator's 'point of view' and persuasive strategies; the development of plot and characters within the text and the involvement of the implied readers in the construction of its overall meaning. Many new insights have been gained by this method, but its neglect of factors external to the narrative leads also to the extreme position of Mark as novelistic fiction (Kermode 1979) or myth of origins (Mack 1988).

Socio-political readings (see Waetjen 1989; Myers 1990) draw upon insights from the sociology of literature and liberation exegesis for their own holistic approach to Mark. They ask questions about the ideological stance of the author and his readers particularly with regard to the economic conditions of their contemporary social context, the ownership of land, taxation, vagrancy and class solidarity. Again, many new insights have been gained, but Mark's Gospel is too concerned with religious faith and an otherworldly, eschatological conception of salvation from sin and death for its genre to be described as that of 'political manifesto'.

I have given above a brief survey of scholarly disputes about method and conflicting proposals about genre that arise not from comparison with other texts but from the examination of the contents and likely purposes of this one. The question of Mark's genre is, in this sense, subject to constant revision and reappraisal, and there is always room for new proposals. In the last part of this section I shall offer some observations on the likely format, style and actual content of Mark's Gospel that point towards a rather different conclusion to those mentioned so far.

Critics have rarely asked what Mark's book looked like, physically. It is noticeably *much shorter* than the other three, which are all the length of a standard ancient scroll. Although this is disputed, the Gospel seems to have lost its final sentences or paragraph. The certainly authentic text finishes at 16.8, and two alternative endings, both very different in style to Mark's, have been added in the manuscript tradition to make up the deficiency. A scroll is unlikely to lose its end (it is the best protected part): but the risk is much greater with a codex (there are many examples of incomplete codices among the papyri). And the length of a codex is not, as in the case of a scroll, more or less predetermined. If Mark was written in codex form, what would that imply? The scroll was the proper format for Jewish religious text and serious Graeco-Roman literature. In the pre-Christian period, the codex was mostly used for business purposes. Especially in the case of Mark, which is so short, the codex has a singular advantage over the scroll: it can be easily carried about. It is unlikely that such a book would be reproduced in multiple copies for sale. It would rather have been read aloud to assembled companies of adherents or interested enquirers. Mark's Gospel is not an attempt to record the story of Jesus for posterity, that is, for preservation over time, but to spread the good news to other contemporaries, that is, for transportation over distances. As with the Pauline letter-form, so also with the Marcan Gospel-form, geographical necessity was the mother of literary invention.

The style of Mark is that of the spoken word. This widely acknowledged fact has usually been taken as an indication of its *origin* in the Church's oral tradition; but it may also throw light on Mark's *purpose*, that is, that the book was intended to be performed in popular oral contexts. Mark then would have been an oral storyteller who decided at some stage to write down one particular performance of his tale: the tradition is, in other words, just as Marcan as the redaction.

The book starts with a verbless sentence that may be its title. 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.' It would be anachronistic to interpret this as 'Here begins the gospel . . .', because, as we have seen, 'gospel' is not used in the literary sense in the New Testament. Although the 'beginning' (*archē*) usually has a temporal meaning, it may also imply priority in importance (see Heb. 6.1) and, if so, the book's title might be rendered, 'Basic Preaching about Jesus'. The opening scenes of the Gospel suggest that one of Mark's main interests is missionary preaching. The first character to appear is John the itinerant preacher of a baptism of repentance. Jesus, after his own baptism and anointing as Spirit-filled Son of God, continues the mission to preach the gospel (1.15) and his first public act is to call others to join him as 'fishers of men' (1.16–20). The theme of mission is strongly emphasized in the first half-chapter and continues through later scenes where the gospel is proclaimed in acts of healing and exorcism, by debates with opponents and implicitly through parables and the two feeding miracles, which disclose the secret plan of God to open the gospel to all.

Despite all the scholarly discussion about a *messianic* secret in Mark, the noun 'secret' (*mysterion*) only occurs once, in reference to the parables (4.10–12) and there it has nothing to do with Jesus' messiahship and everything to do with mission, the mystery of why some people respond to the word and others for various reasons do not (4.13–20). The quotation from Isaiah 6.9f. is used also by Paul (Rom. 11.7) in

his attempt to explain the 'mystery' of missionary failure and success (see Rom. 11.25).

After the mission charge (6.6–12), delayed to enhance its dramatic contrast with the rejection of Jesus by his own townsfolk (6.1–6), there is a section that begins and ends with miraculous feedings (6.30–44 and 8.1–10). They form a bracket around a private conversation with a Gentile woman (7.27–9), which offers the clue to their puzzling significance. The emphasis in the feeding stories is not on the miracle itself or on Jesus as miracle-worker, but on the unused leftovers (see 8.17–20), and this is explained by the words of Jesus: 'Let the children first be fed. It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs' and the Syro-Phoenician woman's quick-witted response: 'Yes, Lord, but even the dogs beneath the table eat the children's leftovers.' The mission to Israel has priority, as it did for Paul (Rom. 1.17), but Israel's decline into hardness of heart and rejection of the gospel require extraordinary means, if it is to be turned to good purpose (again see Rom. 11.11–12).

The suffering Messiah is a stumbling-block even to his closest followers (see 8.33) and the second half of Mark's Gospel dwells on this theme, and includes disciples themselves in various kinds of 'suffering' for the sake of the gospel (8.35), poverty, homelessness, apostolic care for all the churches (10.30) and humble service (9.35; 10.43) as well as the threat of violence and literal martyrdom (13.9, 11f.). But the time between the resurrection and Parousia of the Son of Man will be filled not just with suffering but with the proclamation of the gospel to all nations (13.10). Already, at the moment of his death, the first Gentile convert is won over to the new faith (15.39). And the promise (14.28; 16.7) that Jesus will go before his disciples into Galilee, the threshold of the Gentile world, is among other things a promise of the power of the risen Christ in the missionary work of the Church.

Thus, the whole content of Mark's Gospel continually focuses on mission, in particular towards non-Jews. It hints also at a profound theology of mission: Mark is attempting to explain the riddle of Christianity, that faith in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah should be increasingly rejected by Jews and yet accepted more and more by Gentiles. In this context, his practice of using the 'things concerning Jesus' as the medium for preaching was itself somewhat problematic. Should the Church not rather play down its Jewish roots? But without them Jesus of Nazareth would not remain the centre of Christian worship and life. So Mark resolves this dilemma by showing that Jesus anticipated and endorsed the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. He presents Jesus' teaching and miracles, as well as his crucifixion, as possible occasions of misunderstanding and rejection. For 'signs' and 'wisdom' are not sufficient to elicit saving faith – as Paul also asserts (1 Cor. 1.22f); the stumbling-block of the cross is the true power and wisdom of God. By portraying even the Jewish disciples as temporarily blind to this truth, Mark offers hope even for the final conversion of Israel.

Recent scholarship has been reluctant to follow this line of reasoning, and has sought to contain Mark's Gospel within the inner life of one particular community, claiming that it was written 'from faith to faith'. It is true that the Gospel presupposes some acquaintance with, and even acceptance of, certain Christian presuppositions, about the rites of baptism and Eucharist, for example, or the meaning of the titles applied to Jesus. However, in dramatic performance it would have been able not only

to reinforce the faith of adherents, but also to attract those on the edge of the movement, who might be drawn further in. Mark's Gospel does not merely reflect community; it also has the power to create community (see further, Bauckham 1998). It is a handbook for itinerant storytelling and mission preaching.

MATTHEW

Matthew's Gospel quickly gained pre-eminence in the early Church; it is the one most frequently quoted by second-century fathers from Ignatius of Antioch (115 CE) onwards; it appears at the head of the emerging canon; it is credited (unlike Mark and Luke) with direct authorship by an apostle. According to Papias in the same passage as that quoted above, 'Matthew made an ordered arrangement of the sayings (or oracles, *logia*) in the Hebrew language, and each translated them as he was able.' While some scholars would still want to lend some credence to this testimony, referring it to possible Matthean authorship of a pre-Markan Aramaic gospel or of Q, most believe that it is mistaken. Matthew's Gospel, at any rate, was not written by the tax-collector apostle (so named at Matt. 9.9, but contrast Mark 2.14) who was an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry, for it was composed originally in Greek and is closely based on Mark (using 95 per cent of it, with many close verbal parallels). In effect, Matthew is a second edition of Mark, amplifying it with a fuller account of Jesus' birth and his teaching in parables and aphorisms, along with multiple quotations, allusions and typological patterns drawn from Jewish scripture. At the same time as presenting a more Jewish portrait of Christ as Son of David, New Moses (see Allison 1993) and Teacher of true righteousness, this Gospel also contains a strain of anti-Jewish polemic so virulent that it has even been doubted whether its author could himself have been a Jew (cf. e.g. Meier 1976: 14–21). This is the most puzzling aspect of Matthew, to which we shall return: its anti-Jewish, Christian Judaism.

The evangelist was almost certainly a Jewish Christian (Luz 1989: 79f.): he was able to translate Jewish scripture directly from the Hebrew to suit his own purposes (e.g. 8.17) and to organize the genealogy with which the book begins (1.2–17) into three series of 14, creating a subtle allusion to David (the sum of the Hebrew letters of whose name have that numerical value – the technique is known as *gematria*). From his orderly arrangement (Papias was correct in this observation, at least) of the teaching of Jesus into five substantial sermons, each ending with the same formula (see e.g. 7.28), it is possible that he was himself a Jewish teacher, who had become, as he says at 13.52, 'a scribe disciplined to the Kingdom of Heaven', and that one of his purposes in writing was pedagogical. Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that Matthew has reduced the story of Jesus to exegesis and moral exhortation; the narrative framework – even if it is largely taken over from Mark – is still important to him, for it provides the context of forgiveness and grace in which the Gospel's severe ethical demands are to be situated.

Nevertheless, the theme of right conduct is almost as important for Matthew as that of right belief, and reveals his peculiar purpose in writing. There are repeated references to 'righteousness' and 'doing the will' of the Heavenly Father, some of which are probably editorial (e.g. 6.33; 7.21). On the one hand, Matthew constantly

attacks the scribes and Pharisees for failing to keep the Law. On the other hand, he warns members of his community that their salvation is in doubt unless they produce fruits worthy of repentance. There are therefore two sides to Matthew's rhetoric: an externally directed polemic and an internally directed exhortation. And these are closely interrelated – the moral superiority of Christians is to be the practical proof of their claim to have replaced Israel as the people of God.

In a pioneering redaction-critical study of Matthew (Bornkamm et al. 1963) Gerhard Barth argued that the internal threat was decisive for understanding the Gospel, and that those (7.22f.) who prophesy and work miracles 'in the name' but whose deeds are lawlessness (*anomia*) were antinomian libertine gnostics within the community (of the sort Paul may have confronted at Corinth). But 'lawlessness' is a practical and heedless (see 25.44) failure to act charitably; it is not a theoretical rejection of the rule of law. Even the Pharisees can be charged with the same fault (23.28). Furthermore, spiritual enthusiasts would be more likely to be rigorist in ethics (this is probably the case in Corinth) than libertine. Whatever its precise cause, the internal threat is real enough; and it gives rise to a whole series of 'division parables' separating wise from foolish (e.g. 7.24–7), faithful from unfaithful (e.g. 25.21, 26), rotten from productive disciples (e.g. 7.18).

If lawlessness has to be avoided, how much law is positively to be obeyed? Does Matthew's community insist on strict observance of Torah even for its Gentile members? This is a difficult question to answer. On the one hand, Matthew has taken over from Mark incidents where certain strict applications of sabbath law (12.1–13) are rejected, and yet, on the other, he implies that, even in a situation of life or death (24.20), it will still be rigidly observed. A key passage on this issue is 5.17–18: 'Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished.' The introduction (v. 17) is probably redactional and indicates that what follows is intended as a response to the accusation that Christians fail to observe Torah. This is firmly denied; rather, Jesus came to 'fulfil' the law and the prophets in the minutest detail. But there is a deliberate ambiguity in this statement. For prophecy is 'fulfilled' (cf. the frequent fulfilment quotations) by enactment in messianic history (see 'until all things be accomplished', v. 18), while the Law is fulfilled by observance of its commands. For Matthew what is not 'fulfilled' in one way is 'fulfilled' in the other. Paul argues in a not dissimilar fashion when he says that outward circumcision is just a symbol of inward circumcision (Rom. 2.29), which is achieved through a 'circumcision not made with hands', namely baptism and new life in Christ (Col. 2.11). While Jewish Christians in Matthew's community probably continued with the practice, circumcision was not to be imposed on Gentile converts, for baptism was sufficient. It is surely no accident that this Gospel, unlike Luke's, passes over in silence the circumcision of Jesus in the birth story. The allegorization of obsolete laws was not of course peculiar to Matthew: post-70 CE Judaism had to do the same with the laws of sacrifice. And his apologetic against the accusation of law-breaking quickly turns into polemic against the accusers. The scribes and Pharisees are berated for hypocrisy, evasive casuistry, and superficial conformity disguising inward corruption.

Jewish Christian as it no doubt was, Matthew's church was nevertheless open to the mission to the Gentiles. The evidence on this issue is also admittedly somewhat confusing. Matthew has edited the Mission Charge to exclude explicitly from its scope Gentiles and Samaritans (10.5), and even seems to allow no time for more extensive mission before the coming of the Son of Man (10.23). Jesus was sent only to the 'lost sheep of the House of Israel' (10.6, cf. 15.24). Furthermore, Gentiles are attacked for their wordiness in prayer (6.7), and worldiness of life (6.32), in a way that implies that none belongs to the Church (cf. 18.17). However, greatly outweighing this evidence is the emphatic commission at the end of the book (28.16–20) to baptize and teach all the Gentile nations, and many earlier passages imply a similar openness (e.g. 12.18–21 – a Matthean fulfilment quotation, drawn from Isa. 42.1–4); indeed Gentiles are to replace the unbelieving Jews in the Kingdom (see 8.11–12; 21.43). Assuming that Matthew has not merely conflated conflicting traditions, his intention may have been to grant Israel the prerogative of an initially exclusive mission in order to highlight the grave consequences of her failure to respond to it, for the future judgement of the Son of Man had been exemplified historically in the fall of Jerusalem. Since 'true Jews' of whatever race are those who believe in Jesus as Christ, those who reject him become 'Gentiles' even if they are Jews. (For a similar polemical inversion of terms, see Phil. 3.2 where Paul calls Jewish opponents '[uncircumcised] dogs' and claims the title 'true circumcision' for Gentile Christians.)

Clearly, then, Matthew is not so much of a hardline Jewish Christian (if ever such existed in the early Church) as to exclude the possibility of salvation for Gentiles. But to determine more precisely what kind of Christian Judaism he advocated requires an investigation into the kind of Judaism he opposed.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 stimulated renewed interest in the Jewish background of Matthew's Gospel (Stendahl 1968). The Qumran community was a perfectionist and ascetic group who studied scripture in a scholastic way for its clues into the meaning of the last days; they were in dispute both with the Jerusalem priesthood and with those they called 'speakers of smooth things', possibly in reference to the Pharisees. In several respects, then, the similarities with this Gospel are striking: and it might be tempting to call Matthew's Judaism a Christian Essenism. But, though ascetic (cf. Matt. 19.12, on celibacy), there is no evidence that Matthew's community has withdrawn into monastic isolation, or that the book is the product of a school.

In his classic study of the setting of the Sermon on the Mount, W. D. Davies (1964) pointed to the parallels between Matthew's Gospel and early rabbinic Judaism as it attempted to reconstitute itself after the Jewish War, as a way of explaining the extreme tension between them. Like the Jewish Christians who had escaped Jerusalem before it fell (24.16) the scribal schools under the leadership of Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai gained safe passage out of the besieged city from Vespasian, the Roman general, soon to be emperor. Neither group was ready to stay and die in defence of Jerusalem. No doubt each afterwards accused the other of bringing upon the nation that unmitigated disaster. For Matthew it was the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish leadership that was the root cause (24.38–41; cf. 27.25) of this punishment from God. For rabbinic Judaism it was those who failed to observe

Torah correctly, such as the followers of the Nazarene, who were responsible for destroying the Temple, this time round just as before (Jer. 7.3f.).

In post-70 Judaism, the vacuum left by the cessation of the sacrificial cult in Jerusalem was filled by Torah and in particular by the 'acts of loving-kindness', namely, almsgiving, fasting and prayer. The proof-text favoured by Johannan to justify this transfer was Hosea 6.6, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice' – a text that is one of Matthew's favourites too (9.13; 12.17); but whereas reconstituted Judaism tried to use public prayers, fasts and almsgiving to inculcate Jewish solidarity, Matthew's church stood apart from this movement, rejecting such display as hypocritical and insisting on an inward piety that would not be visibly divisive between its Jewish and Gentile members (6.1–18).

Observance of Torah in accordance with its interpretation by the scribes became the main identity marker for Jews in this period, and Matthew by no means dismisses the importance of scribal *halakah* (oral law). In [chapter 23](#) Jesus begins a long tirade against the scribes and Pharisees by conceding that they 'sit on Moses' seat' (23.2) and possess the key of knowledge (cf. 21.13), though they fail to practise what they preach. It has sometimes been deduced from such statements that Matthean Jewish Christians were still 'within the fold' and able to benefit from scribal teaching by attendance at synagogue. But Stanton (1992) and others have argued cogently that they had decisively broken with the Jewish synagogues (called '*your* synagogues', e.g. 23.34). Matthew was aware that conditions that applied at the time Jesus was presumed to be delivering this speech no longer applied. His purpose in including the qualified endorsement of scribal authority is to provide an analogy for the Jewish Christian leadership in his mixed community, who like Peter held the power of the 'keys' and were entitled to legislate ('bind and loose', 16.19) for the true Israel, the Church (16.18). This is the only Gospel that uses the term church (*ekklesia*) and in slightly different senses in its two occurrences. At 16.18 it has a universal reference, of the whole company of believers looking back to their apostolic foundations ('on this rock I will build my Church') and forward to its eschatological victory ('the powers of death will not prevail against it'). In the other instance (18.17) it refers to the local gathering of Christians, exercising their corporate responsibility for church discipline. It would be a mistake to exaggerate this difference; for universal and local concepts of the church coexist in Paul's letters (Phil. 3.6; cf. 4.15) and the authority of the community does not detract from the apostolic office (1 Cor. 5.4b), although the use of grand titles, like those of contemporary Judaism, 'Rabbi' and 'Abba', is frowned on (23.8–10).

Matthew's legitimation of Christ-centred Judaism as the true heir to God's promises to Israel produces a distinctive emphasis in his Christology, namely Jesus as Wisdom and Torah embodied. This is already implied in the birth narrative where Emmanuel is taken as a title for Jesus, 'God with us' (1.23). In the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount (5.21ff.), the only one who could on his own authority ('I say unto you . . .') intensify and interiorize the Law of Moses must represent the eternal Torah of God. In a pivotal passage, 11.25–30, which momentarily reaches the lofty heights of Johannine Christology, Matthew represents Christ as the unique plenipotentiary and revealer of the Father, who like Wisdom (Ecclus 24.19–24 and ch. 51) summons those who feel burdened by legal obligation to come and learn obedience

through the attractive beauty of righteousness. In a similar vein at 18.20 Matthew appears to adapt a Jewish proverb (Mishnah *Abot* 3.2): 'If two sit together to discuss the Law, the Glory (*Shekhinah*) rests between them.' If so, it has been thoroughly christologized: it is meeting 'in the name of Christ', not studying Torah in the synagogue, that guarantees the presence of the true 'Glory' of God (which is Jesus himself). The invisible spiritual presence represented by these 'I' sayings is not so much the Jesus of history as the Risen Christ whose words conclude the Gospel (28.20): 'Lo, I am with you always.'

As we should have expected from a Gospel written more than a generation later than Jesus, there is evidence of the problem caused by the delay of the Parousia (see 25.5, 'the bridegroom is delayed'). And yet Matthew underscores the importance of continuing to believe in the imminence of judgement by ending each of his discourses on this note. The last, [chapters 24–5](#), is particularly striking in this respect. Matthew takes over from Mark with little change the apocalyptic prophecy of Jerusalem's fall and the coming of the Son of Man, but then adds the parables of the Ten Maidens, the Talents and the vision of the last assize, commonly called the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. In each case the emphasis is on producing a store of good works in this life. For Matthew the End may no longer be temporally so near, and since Christ is always present (28.20) there need be no anxiety in the wait for his return; but it is still morally pressing and inevitable. Eschatology has ceased to be a way of discerning the hand of God in the final stages of human history; it has become instead the ultimate sanction for ethical exhortation.

As an expanded second edition of Mark, Matthew inevitably shares some of the purposes of his main source. Its undiminished emphasis on mission implies that this book also is meant in some way to serve that end. But there is, at the same time, a heavier emphasis on the needs of the Christian community. The Gospel legitimates the Church's claim, against contemporary Jewish opponents, to be the true Israel, defined, not by Temple, land or Law, but by allegiance to God's Anointed; it also informs its audiences of their own responsibility to live up to that claim in practice. In other words, Matthew adds polemical and didactic elements to his kerygmatic narrative.

The exclusion of Jewish Christians from the synagogue would naturally have led to an increase in the use of Old Testament scripture in meetings of the Christian *ekklesia*. Its worship would no longer be supplementary to that of the synagogue but a rival replacement of it. That Matthew's Gospel is well suited to the liturgical needs of the Church has long been recognized (Kilpatrick 1946). While it is difficult to correlate precisely the sequence of themes in the Gospel with Jewish lectionary cycles of readings from the Law and Prophets (*pace* Goulder 1974), it is in general more than likely that Matthew's scroll was the first attempt we know of to meet the need for specifically Christian scripture.

LUKE

Luke's Gospel poses something of a problem in terms of genre, because of its second volume, the Acts of the Apostles. The interconnecting prefaces (Luke 1.1–4; Acts 1.1–2) show that the two books were meant in their final form to be read as one.

But it is possible that they were originally separate, and even that Acts was the first to be composed.

The Gospel follows closely the now familiar pattern of a kerygmatic, didactic and apologetic story about Jesus. But the Acts of the Apostles is unique in the New Testament, although it stimulated a number of imitations to be found among the later New Testament apocrypha (Schneemelcher 1991: 1). Its added title is misleading. According to the writer's own definition of an apostle (Acts 1.21f.), as an associate of Jesus' public ministry and eyewitness of his resurrection, several of the main characters, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas and Paul, are excluded from that category, and many of the twelve full apostles play no part in the story. Acts is more fittingly described as the Acts of the Holy Spirit guiding the progress of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome and in terms of genre as a kind of *travellers' tales*, satisfying the thirst for a good adventure story, new places and strange happenings.

Both volumes are clearly written from the perspective of Christian faith, but unusually the author can also view the 'Way' more objectively, as from the outside, as 'the sect of the Nazarenes' with Paul as its 'pestilent ring-leader' (Acts 24.5). Luke-Acts would perhaps not be altogether incomprehensible to sympathetic outsiders and, from the cosmopolitan scope of the story, the primarily intended Christian readership is unlikely to have been confined to a single location.

The preface to the Gospel is a rare example of an evangelist appearing momentarily 'in front of his text' and offering to explain its sources and purpose. It has for that reason attracted much scholarly attention and debate (see Alexander 1993). The preface is written in an elegant literary Greek, unmatched by anything that follows in the Gospel (though passages in the last part of Acts come close). The 'Septuagintal' style of the infancy narrative and the Synoptic style of the account of Jesus' ministry must be concessions by the author to Christian convention. He claims that 'many' have written before him – a permissible exaggeration in context, but apart from Mark we cannot be sure how many other texts he had to hand. It partly depends on the date we ascribe to this work. It must have been written after the capture of Jerusalem (21.20) and probably some time afterwards because it envisages a subsequent period, called 'the times of the Gentiles', during which Jerusalem will be trampled down (21.24). No certain quotation from the Gospel can be identified before Justin Martyr (c.150 CE) and nothing from Acts until even later. There are parallels between Luke and Matthew (the Q material) and also between Luke and John (especially in the resurrection appearances). The later the Gospel is dated the greater the likelihood that the evangelist knew Matthew's Gospel and used it, whether by direct consultation or from memory, along with other overlapping Synoptic-type traditions; and he may even have known the Gospel of John perhaps in an earlier version to the one we know. Its major themes like the revision of eschatology, the continuity but separation between Judaism and Christianity, and the relation between Church and State (see below) might be particularly apposite to conditions prevailing under Trajan (98–117 CE: see esp. Pliny, *Letters* 10.96, 97). The dating of Luke-Acts remains, however, an unsolved problem.

While the preface claims that the following work is based on the author's own exhaustive research, it admits that he was not himself an eyewitness of the events he reports. That is clearly so from his extensive use of sources in the Gospel. Is it

also true of Acts? Four passages in the second half of Acts are phrased in the first-person plural (16.10–17; 20.5–15; 21.1–18 and 27.1 – 28.16) as though the author was present with Paul on those occasions. Church tradition eventually (Irenaeus c.180) came to identify Paul's companion as 'Luke, the beloved physician' (Col. 4.14). But if this were so, it would be hard to explain the numerous errors of fact and interpretation in his portrait of Paul (Lentz 1993). Other explanations might be that the author was drawing on information from an eyewitness in these sections, or that the first-person plural is a literary fiction (it is used frequently in the Acts of John, see Schneemelcher 1991: 2). The fact that a minority of manuscripts have yet a fifth 'we' passage (at Acts 11.28) may even indicate that this phenomenon is secondary and has arisen early in the process of scribal transmission. To record personal reminiscences is unlikely to be one of Luke's main motives for writing: to understand these better, we need to look at the way the evangelist edits the sources available to him, and try to detect his theological and ideological stance.

On source-critical grounds, the basic motivation for the production of Luke's Gospel and the explanation of its resulting genre would be largely the same as those for Matthew's, the desire to expand Mark's narrative with more extensive use of the sayings of Jesus. The distinctive features of Luke, for example parables, birth story and resurrection appearances would be due to a Lukan special source, either already combined with Q (the Proto-Luke theory) or a peculiar stream of tradition to which the evangelist alone had access.

As redaction-criticism moved the focus of attention from sources to their editing, a different sort of answer to the question of genre began to emerge: Luke's Gospel as a theological schematization, under the form of storytelling, that provides a solution to the problem of the delay of the Parousia (Conzelmann 1960). According to this analysis, the expected End has been relegated to the distant, indefinite future. Its place has been filled with a salvation-historical scheme in three distinct periods: the time of the Old Testament prophets culminating and ending with John the Baptist: the 'middle of time' when the transcendent Kingdom of God comes near in the ministry and person of Jesus; and finally, decisively separated from it by the Ascension, the age of the Church, in which the Spirit functions as a substitute and compensation for the loss of Parousia hope. This theory is clearer and more cogent than Luke's actual text. There, imminent and delay strands are found side by side (Wilson 1973: 67–77). John the Baptist is both the end of the old age, but also – most obviously in the parallel infancy stories – the child of promise heralding the new. The Ascension is explicitly a pattern for what will happen (in reverse) at the Parousia (Acts 1.11) and the Spirit (given, according to Acts 2.17, 'in the last days') still retains its eschatological forward-looking function.

A more holistic reading of Luke that rejects too sharp a distinction between tradition and redaction (since the author by choosing to include traditions endorses them and makes them effectively redactional) may somewhat blur the contours of the theology, but it provides an even more interesting Lukan answer to the problem of Parousia delay. The evangelist was undoubtedly aware that, beginning with the twelve apostles themselves, there had been a false expectation of a speedy arrival of the Kingdom (19.11). He suggests that if they had paid closer attention to the Lord's teaching, they would have realized that first the gospel would have to be preached

to the ends of the earth and that would take some time (24.47). However, once Paul had preached in Rome, the outline of Acts implies, the essential programme of missionary expansion was completed. What happened afterwards is theologically less significant and is not to be recounted as part of sacred history.

Luke has subdivided the age of the Church into the recordable apostolic age and the subapostolic age, which is not worthy of inclusion in his record. The first, initial, period of delay for the sake of salvation was foreseen and intended; the second, post-apostolic, period of patient waiting and quiet perseverance in hope (18.1–8) could end any time now, for it would not interrupt the divine plan. Luke's concern is to demonstrate that the apostles faithfully imitated Christ, in mission and martyrdom, and authentically expounded the faith. He is not interested in setting up institutional structures for the long-term survival of the Church, like the authorization of successors to the apostles or the regularization of the rites of baptism and laying on of hands. The characteristic twofold shape of his work set the pattern of a twofold historical criterion for Christian truth, reflected in the New Testament canon itself: *Christ and Apostle – Gospel and Epistle*.

A further subsidiary answer to the problem is offered in a series of special Lukan passages, the Rich Fool (12.16–21), the Rich Man and Lazarus (16.19–31) and the Penitent Thief (23.40–3). While the end of history may or may not be in sight – we just do not know – the end of any individual's history (death, judgement, hell or paradise) is always in imminent prospect. These Lukan insights, the separation of apostolic from subapostolic history and the individualization of eschatology, were eventually to become the Church's official answer to the problem.

Luke's attitude towards political power may reveal another of his purposes. As in the earlier Gospels, the Jewish authorities are regularly portrayed as unscrupulous and hostile towards Jesus and as the instigators of persecution against his followers. But there are some odd exceptions: at 13.31, for example, some Pharisees attempt to warn Jesus of Herod's murderous intentions, and Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 5.34) pleads for tolerance (5.38f.) towards the movement. The Jerusalem populace at the crucifixion retains a touching sympathy for him (23.48) which is entirely lacking in the other Gospels. In the trial before Pilate, the Roman governor three times affirms the innocence of the defendant and pleads for him to be released (23.16). But his pusillanimity is already an indictment of him, from a Roman administrative perspective, and the picture is confused further by the fact that Luke alone recalls the outrage of Pilate's slaughter of Galilean pilgrims (13.1). The evangelist may have muddled the incident with Pilate's notorious massacre of Samaritan worshippers that led to his downfall, but, uniquely in the Gospels, he here comes closer to the negative and probably more accurate portrait of Pilate that appears in Josephus (e.g. *Antiquities* 18.85). In Acts, Paul's status as a Roman citizen, once known, is respected by the authorities (Acts 16.37–9; 22.25–9) and is his means of escaping the clutches of Jewish opponents. But again, more ambiguous notes are sounded: for example, the procrastination of the governor Felix in dealing with Paul's case is explained by the suggestion that he was hoping for a bribe (24.26).

The once popular theory that Luke–Acts was intended as an 'apologia' addressed to a Roman governor, seeking to demonstrate the innocence, nobility and loyalty to the State of Jesus and his followers, in order to gain for Christianity the special

privileges enjoyed by the Jewish religion, has been increasingly questioned by recent scholarship (see e.g. Esler 1987: 201–19). ‘Political legitimization’, rather than direct apologetic, is no doubt a more accurate description of Luke’s purpose. Faith gives one the courage to challenge corruption and stand up to oppression, but, for the time being at any rate, some way of living at peace with the pagan world is necessary.

If Luke is politically quietist, socially his message appears at first sight to be more radical. Warnings against the wealthy and the preference for voluntary poverty (see Johnson 1977) are pervasive themes in the Gospel, starting already in the infancy story (1.52f.). In the programmatic Nazareth sermon (4.18–21) Isaiah’s prophecy of good news ‘for the poor’ is at last fulfilled. The Lukan beatitudes offer an unqualified blessing on the poor and plain woe to the rich (6.20, 24). The theme is especially prominent in two sections of the travel narrative (12.13–34; 16.1–31). The account of the early Jerusalem church sharing its possessions and having ‘everything in common’ (Acts 2.45; 4.34–7) is probably an idealization, but, whether practicable or not, the ideal is still cherished.

Yet, for all its emphasis on poverty, Luke’s is not a Gospel directed only at the poor. Wealthy converts are welcome (Acts 17.4; 18.8). The rich may retain their capital, as long as they do so honestly (cf. Acts 5.3), and, imitating the good Samaritan (10.35), distribute alms (11.41; 12.33; 16.9) to those in need. The urban Christian congregations of Luke’s day attracted converts not least by offering a security safety-net for the sick, the unemployed and widows (on the latter see 2.37; Acts 6.1). His warnings to rich and callous outsiders function as congratulations to the rich and generous insiders. Luke is anxious, like the writer of the Pastoral Epistles, to help those who may be poor but are at least respectable (1 Tim. 5.3–16). Luke’s portrait of Paul in Acts is illuminating on the topic of social class. On his Jewish side, Paul is a distinguished graduate of Gamaliel’s school, fluent in Hebrew and learned in the scriptures; on the Roman side, he is a citizen by birth, socially a match for those who presume to interrogate him. The Christian Way is one of voluntary poverty and charitable giving, but it is not uncivilized or uncouth!

The themes I have selected for particular comment, the timing of the End, politics and poverty, illuminate some of the extra motives behind a complex and multifaceted work. I might have discussed others – the apparent understatement, in order to avoid undue complexity and controversy, of Christology (Christ as Prophet, 7.16; 24.19) and Atonement (Christ as martyr 23.46; contrast Mark 15.34); the emphasis on the joy and power of the Spirit, the very positive characterization of women throughout. Each of these in its own way contributes to the attractiveness of Luke’s presentation.

To return finally to the preface, Luke dedicates his work to a high-ranking Roman official who we can assume was already sympathetic to the movement. His name, as literary patron of the work, is used to commend it to other readers. The Gospel and Acts were evidently written in the format of two scrolls. Whether the author saw his second volume through to actual publication has been questioned (so Strange 1992: 178–85) but ‘publication’ was definitely intended. With Luke–Acts we reach a new stage in the sophistication of early Christian literature, that is books produced in multiple copies and sold for use in the homes of middle-class Christians who,

reading them, will be assured that their new faith is intellectually and socially respectable.

JOHN

At first sight, the Gospel according to John looks like the same kind of work as the Synoptics. It recounts Jesus' public career from his baptism onwards, as a mixture of teaching and healings, and it concentrates particularly on his final week in Jerusalem. But within this similarity of structure there are even more striking differences. Instead of a birth story, the book starts with a prose-poem on the Word of God in creation and redemption. The teaching takes a very different form from the pithy aphorisms and vivid parables of the Synoptic tradition; instead we find long drawn-out monologues and dialogues that circle around images and abstract concepts of universal application. The miracle stories bear closer comparison with Synoptic parallels (esp. 6.1–21), but they have been subordinated to Christology, as manifestations of the divine glory of Jesus (2.12) or as pegs on which to hang teaching or debates about his person. In place of the Synoptic parables of the Kingdom, we find christological allegories, Christ as living Bread, good Shepherd and true Vine. The Passion narrative begins already at [chapter 12](#), midway through the book and is proportionately longer even than Mark's, but much of it is devoted to two farewell discourses (13–14 and 15–17) that are the Johannine equivalent of the Synoptic Apocalypse (Mark 13 and par.) and replace expectation of the future coming of the Son of Man with the presence of the Paraclete–Advocate to strengthen the disciples' faith as they undergo persecution in the world.

At certain points of difference, for example the three-year public career, or the Sanhedrin trial of Jesus in his absence (11.47–53) and the crucifixion the day before Passover (18.28), it is plausible to argue for John's superior historicity, but at most others the Synoptic account may be preferable. This leaves us with the problem of explaining how such a divergent tradition arose. Bultmann (1941) argued that the Fourth Gospel is a combination of three different genres: the Signs source, that is, a numbered collection of miracle stories (or *aretalogy*) portraying Jesus as a Hellenistic wonder-worker, which the evangelist is seeking to correct; a set of proto-gnostic revelation *discourses*, which the evangelist has Christianized to convey his understanding of eternal life available through Christ; and finally a more or less conventional *Passion narrative*, which counterbalances the idea of the divine revealer with an insistence on his mortality and therefore full humanity.

Although the reuse of sources probably does help to explain the present form of the Gospel (see Fortna 1988), Bultmann's theory, which involves accidental displacement at a later stage of composition, is not widely accepted today. Certainly a later editor, different from the main author, has made some minor corrections (e.g. 4.2) and at least one major addition ([ch. 21](#)), but how many other changes are due to him is difficult to say. The homogeneity of the style makes it likely that the Gospel grew out of the preaching activity of one remarkable early Christian prophet (Lindars 1972: 51–4). The stylistic similarity between the Gospel and the so-called First Epistle of John (which is not a letter but 'a written sermon') supports this suggestion. The same kind of summary statements about life, light, truth and love appear in

both, though in the Gospel these meditations are attached to sayings or deeds of Jesus, unlike the First Epistle, which ignores them. The warrant for this free development of the Jesus tradition is given in the Gospel itself in passages that speak of the Holy Spirit as Paraclete or Advocate. The eschatological promise of the Spirit's assistance to Christians on trial (see Mark 13.11) has been extended to include the present functions of remembering, expounding and defending the truths of faith (cf. e.g. 16.4–15, and see further Harvey 1976).

The identity of the prophet whose inspired words were accorded such authority is unknown. But the final editor, writing after his death, believed – perhaps mistakenly – that he had been an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry. At several points in the Gospel, a disciple is referred to as the 'one whom Jesus loved' or 'the other disciple'. He occupies the place closest to Jesus at the Last Supper (13.23; in the same relation with Jesus as he has with the Father, 1.18) and unlike the rest stands by him during his trial and crucifixion (19.26f.). He is the first to believe in the resurrection (20.8). At each of these points he is sharply contrasted with Peter. It may be that the negative portrait of the latter in the Synoptics has created an idealized 'true disciple'; or that the Johannine community is here projecting on to the narrative a representative of its own claim to have a more profound understanding of Christ than other Christian groups; or that a genuine historical figure (such as the apostle John, who is otherwise not mentioned in the Gospel) lies at the root of the Johannine tradition. Indeed, all three of these explanations may be partly correct.

The Fourth Gospel has often been interpreted in the same way as Paul's epistles, as a work of constructive theology: the main concern of this approach was to lay bare the essential structure of thought and the intellectual influences on the mind of the writer (Dodd 1953). If the Synoptics were all much earlier than John it would be possible to claim that they provided him with the raw material for his Gospel as a kind of meditation on the inner meaning of the Christ event in the full light of Easter faith. For a while in the mid-twentieth century this view was widely questioned (Dodd 1963) but it is coming back into popularity.

Certainly one of the main purposes of the Fourth Gospel is to expound the doctrine of Christ. The death and resurrection of Jesus, still affirmed as central to the *kerygma* (pace Käsemann 1968), are set against a wider backdrop of the incarnation of the unique and pre-existent Son of God. It has often been assumed that such a lofty Christology must be a late development and could only have arisen after the Church had abandoned its Jewish roots and shaken off the constraints of monotheism. But the development is not that late: Paul's Christology, after all, is earlier and just as exalted (see Phil. 2.6–11). And there was much speculation about mediatorial figures in Jewish apocalyptic texts that veered close to the wind on the issue of a strict monotheism. It is not necessary to posit a Hellenistic background to account for John's theology.

Arguably, Christology is the only doctrine in the Fourth Gospel, since everything else is drawn within its ambit. Thus, salvation consists in replicating the Father–Son relationship in the mutual indwelling of Christ and believers. Creation and future redemption are brought together in the present, timeless moment of communion with Christ through faith and knowledge. The Church is made up of those who are rooted in Christ as true Vine or gathered around him as the good Shepherd. Morality

is reduced to his own new commandment to ‘love each other as I have loved you’ (13.34).

John’s Gospel well illustrates the difficulty of using the story of the pre-Easter Jesus as the means of promoting faith in the post-Easter Christ. The evangelist is torn between fidelity to his storyline and full commitment to its central character. If the Gospel contains within it discrete homilies, then the message had to be included in each: it could not be reserved to the denouement of the plot as a whole. An unintended side-effect of this is that it gives the impression of docetism: intellectually at least, Jesus only ‘appears’ to be genuinely human; his head is in the clouds, communing with his Father.

However, a Gospel is not a treatise on Christology, even though John’s encouraged a second-century development in that direction (see section ‘Non-canonical Gospels and So-Called Gospels’ below). And recent scholarship, in two rather different ways, has attempted to recover the importance of the narrative, in spite of the overpowering edifice of Johannine theology.

The literary artistry of the Fourth Evangelist is most apparent in his use of irony, misunderstanding and symbolism (Culpepper 1983). The dialogue with the Samaritan woman is a good example. The audience, who already know that Jesus is the true source of living water, appreciate the privilege of that knowledge in the face of the woman’s literal-minded insistence that the well is deep and the water is stagnant. While the dialogue partners in the text remain at cross-purposes, the evangelist and his audience are drawn ever closer into a relationship of confidentiality and revelation.

The technique of double meaning is apparent also in the larger structures of the Gospel. To take one example, John places the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of the ministry (2.13–22) and the raising of Lazarus in its place at the end (11.1–53). The earlier scene is then related to the Passion by the double meaning of the Psalm text: ‘Zeal for thy house will consume me’ (69.9). The disciples will only understand this later, we are told (2.22) when they realize that the assault on the money changers will result in Jesus’ being ‘consumed’ in his trial and passion. But in John’s rearrangement, the Lazarus episode becomes the immediate antecedent, within the narrative, of those events, and the revised chronology creates a deliberate irony: Jesus will be crucified because of the resurrection! (For further discussion of the narrative-criticism of John, see Stibbe 1992.) In terms of genre, the free use of the imagination brings this Gospel at certain points into the category of fiction, but it is fiction put to the service of theological insight.

The other approach to John’s Gospel that has reassessed its significance as narrative was pioneered by J. L. Martyn (1979) in his study of [chapter 9](#), the man born blind, as a dramatization of Johannine community history. The hostility of ‘the Jews’ in general towards Jesus, which is fully reciprocated (cf. 8.44), is even more emphatic than it is in Matthew. At 9.22 we are told that the Jews had already decided that anyone confessing Jesus as the Christ should be expelled from the synagogue: the motif recurs again at 12.42 and 16.2 – it was obviously important to the evangelist. The Jews try to manoeuvre the man, and even his parents, into confessing Christ, until finally, in frustration and offence at his cheek (v. 34), they excommunicate him anyway. The man born blind is one of the few secondary characters in John who has

his wits about him! Martyn proposed that this incident represents the retrojection into the ministry of Jesus of a recent bitter memory on the part of the Johannine Jewish Christians.

This approach was developed even further by Raymond Brown (1979) who found a whole sequence of events in community history dramatized through the narrative. The founding group in Palestine accepted Jesus as Davidic Messiah and attracted some of the followers of John the Baptist (1.35–7): the latter's role in the Gospel is to encourage others to join. The missionary work of this group among the Samaritans (ch. 4) catalysed the development of a higher Christology of Jesus as a heavenly 'prophet like Moses' (Deut. 18.15). The higher Christology led to controversy and finally breach with the synagogue and a move by Johannine Christians probably into Asia. There they were in competition with other forms of Christianity (represented by Peter in the text). On this showing, the Fourth Gospel tells two stories at the same time: that of Jesus and that of the community. In terms of genre, John would be a Gospel and an Acts, run together. Not all the elements of this comprehensive theory are equally plausible, but its central explanation of the vein of polemic against Judaism, amid the evidence that points to a strongly Jewish dimension in Johannine Christianity, is thoroughly convincing.

At the beginning and end of its evolution as a text, that is, its underlying keryg-matic story and its final editing, John is closer to the form of the Synoptics than it is in the middle of that process, during which explicit and powerful defences of Christological faith, against all detractors, have been incorporated into the Gospel itself: John is both text and interpretation in one. The 'layers' in the book are the result not only of its peculiar prehistory, but also of a deliberate layering technique: characters like the woman of Samaria and the man born blind function at three different levels, that of reported event, that of rhetorical foil and that of collective symbol of the community's history.

NON-CANONICAL GOSPELS AND SO-CALLED GOSPELS

Apart from the four Gospels that made it into the canon, there were several others that are lost to us except for odd citations in the early Church fathers. Origen and Jerome preserve, for example, half a dozen fragments of the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, and a dozen or so from the *Gospel of the Nazaraeans* (Schneemelcher, 1991, 1: 154–78.). These Gospels, though plundered for the odd insight, were excluded as being too 'Jewish Christian' by a Christianity that was increasingly defining itself over against Judaism, and removing that middle category. There were also partial 'Gospels', especially legendary accounts of Jesus' birth, building on those of Matthew and Luke, and ascribed to James and Thomas (ibid., 1: 421–52); and the Passion narrative attributed to Peter (ibid., 1: 216–27). The discovery in 1945 of a Coptic gnostic library (see Robinson 1988) brought many more texts into discussion of the Gospel genre, but with little justification. What are called Gospels by the scribes who produced these translations are actually quite different in form. 'The Secret Sayings of the Living Jesus', which we know as the *Gospel of Thomas*, has no narrative to speak of: it is an amorphous collection of sayings, though quite early in its

original Greek form and may contain, among the dross, some valuable variations on Synoptic material. The *Gospel of Truth* and the *Gospel of Philip* are theological treatises; the *Gospel of the Egyptians* is an imaginative cosmogony; and the fragmentary *Gospel of Mary* (known from earlier papyrus discoveries) is a dialogue between Mary Magdalene and Peter on the gnostic claim to esoteric knowledge. While each is fascinating in itself, none of these texts can throw any light on the Gospel genre in the Bible.

CONCLUSION

The survey above of some of the more distinctive features of the individual Gospels has led us to question further the assumption that there is a generic similarity between them, as though their authors were all consciously engaged in the same activity of 'Gospel-writing'. Only retrospectively, when the four were collected together, did the word 'Gospel' take on that sense. Genre is as much a matter of purpose as of form, and the evangelists' purposes only partially overlap.

Mark's Gospel arose naturally out of oral storytelling as the means of evoking and confirming faith in Christ. It was intended for dramatic performance by itinerant preachers and it contains, for those with ears to hear, an answer to the problem of Christian mission, how to account for the temporary blindness and apparent rejection of the crucified and risen Messiah by his own people.

Matthew was not writing another Gospel of the same type as Mark. Its exhaustive use of his main source implies that this expanded edition was intended to replace it. The evangelist draws on more of the oral tradition of Jesus' teaching than Mark, and sharpens it in two directions, with attacks on Jewish opponents and warnings against backsliding Christians. While Mark, like Paul, still hoped that Israel would finally accept the good news, Matthew's community, violently excluded from the synagogue and constructing its own parallel but separate institutional structures, no longer envisages that possibility. The Gospel may itself be one such institution, the first example of Christian scripture.

Luke's two-volume work is different again. The Gospel is content to coexist with others that the author knows and from which he selects the choicest elements. His main theological purpose is to provide an answer to the problem of continuing history and the disappointment, so far, of hopes for the imminent return of Christ. Luke legitimates a Christ-centred form of Judaism but on different criteria from those used by Matthew, not with arguments about scripture and righteousness, but with the criteria, more familiar in the Graeco-Roman world, of honour, citizenship and compassion towards social inferiors. His work constitutes perhaps the first foray of the Christian movement into the world of publishing and book production.

John's Gospel in its present form is an amalgam of different elements. Its base is a kerygmatic narrative like Mark's but independent, into which have been woven some sermons and meditations in a mystical, poetic style and some sharp passages of polemic against the world and the Jews. These additions are, I suggest, the result of an exceptional kind of inspiration to which the main author of the book lays claim: the spirit of advocacy and prophecy that testifies to Jesus (cf. Rev. 19.10) in the continuing trial of faith. This was finally edited by someone who wanted to

preserve and promote the distinctive insights of the ‘beloved disciple’ in a Christian world that was starting to fill with books (21.25).

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

LETTERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

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Harry Gamble

It is a striking feature of Christian scripture that it consists mainly of letters, especially when we consider that no document of Jewish scripture is a letter. Of the twenty-seven documents belonging to the New Testament, no fewer than twenty-one are letters, or at least have traditionally been regarded as letters. The Apocalypse may legitimately be added for, although it has a distinctive form, it is framed and apparently was disseminated as a letter. Thus of the canonical literature only the four Gospels and Acts do not belong to the epistolary genre. Moreover, within the literature of the New Testament we hear of still other letters – several letters of Paul that have not been preserved (1 Cor. 5:9; 2 Cor. 2:2–4; Col. 4:16), letters of recommendation (2 Cor. 3:1–3), letters from churches to Paul (1 Cor. 7:1), letters announcing decisions of general interest (Acts 15:22–9), and even forged letters (2 Thess. 2:2). The contents of the New Testament suggest that the letter was not merely a prominent form but the most characteristic medium of early Christian writing. This observation is confirmed by a persistent reliance on the letter during the second and third centuries by such Christians writers as Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Dionysius of Corinth and Cyprian of Carthage. Christian letters were, if anything, still more abundantly written in the fourth and fifth centuries, as shown, for example, by the prolific correspondence of Basil, Gregory, Augustine, and Jerome, among others.

The ubiquity of letters in early Christian literature should not, however, be surprising, for there are good reasons why Christians exploited this medium. Christianity from its earliest days was a vigorously missionary faith, and rapidly planted new communities of converts across a broad area: by the end of the first century small Christian conventicles were to be found throughout the eastern Mediterranean world – in Egypt and Syria, across Asia Minor, in Macedonia and the Greek peninsula, and in Italy. Despite their number and wide dispersion, these communities retained a common identity as outposts of the one church, the *ekklesia katholike*, and this identity was both expressed and cultivated by their frequent communications through letters and messengers. Yet the popularity of letters in the early church was not merely situational, but owed much to the larger tradition of letter-writing in the Greco-Roman world.

LETTERS IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

Until modern times, the epistolary form of so many of the documents of the New Testament was little remarked and had no great consequence for their interpretation. To be sure, other letters from antiquity had been preserved as part of the larger classical literary tradition. The letters of Cicero (106–43 BCE), Horace (65–8 BCE), Seneca (4 BCE – 65 CE), Pliny the Younger (61–112 CE), and Fronto (100–166 CE), for example, had long been known, but seemed to have only limited relevance to the letters of the New Testament. Thus it was a watershed in the study of early Christian letters when, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, archaeologists unearthed thousands of papyrus letters in the trash heaps of ancient Egypt. Besides adding enormously to the quantity of extant ancient letters, these discoveries have revealed that there was a lively traffic in letters in the Greco-Roman world. The vitality of the genre owed a good deal to the growth of international commerce, to the large scale displacements of population groups, and to the increasing mobility of individuals around the Mediterranean world. In addition, these discoveries display the great variety of ancient letters: familiar letters (to friends or family), business letters, letters of recommendation, letters of request and petition, and official letters are all well represented. These letters have furnished a new basis for studying the forms, functions and conventions of letter-writing in the ancient world, and have provided a rich context in which to appraise anew early Christian letters. As a result, scholarship in the twentieth century has been in a uniquely privileged position to assess ancient epistolography in general and early Christian letters in particular.

Types of ancient letters

The large number and rich diversity of ancient letters now available has prompted efforts to classify them into types. Many taxonomies have been proposed. A simple but widely influential division was made early in the twentieth century by Adolf Deissmann, the first to undertake a comparative study of ancient letters in light of the papyrus discoveries (Deissmann 1910: 290–301). Deissmann distinguished between ‘letters’ (*Briefe*) and ‘epistles’ (*Episteln*). Letters he defined as actual pieces of correspondence, artless in form and practical in purpose, written for principally private purposes and dealing with ordinary matters of daily life. Epistles, on the other hand, he defined as artistic literary compositions that treat more elevated subjects and are intended for a literary public and posterity. Although this is a necessary and serviceable distinction, it cannot do justice to the immense variety of ancient letters, which requires more elaborate and nuanced typologies. Among more recent efforts to analyze and classify ancient letters, several approaches have been taken. One of these attends mainly to content and on this basis distinguishes eight basic types of letters: public affairs, character sketches, patronage, admonition, domestic affairs, literary issues, geographic and scenic interest, and social courtesy (Sherwin-White 1966). Another approach considers the social functions of ancient letters, and discovers the following types: the personal letter, the business letter, the official letter, the public letter, the nonreal (i.e., fictive or pseudonymous) letter, and the discursive letter (or letter-essay) (Doty 1973: 4–8). Still another, taking a cue from

ancient epistolary theorists, offers a typology based on the rhetorical functions of letters, and proposes the categories of friendship, family, praise, blame, exhortation or advice, meditation, and apology (Stowers 1986). A simpler scheme of three broad categories – private letters, official letters, and literary letters – is basically adequate, though each of these may be subdivided, and though the distinctions are not always hard and fast (Aune 1987: 162–6).

Efforts to classify letters into specific types were made even in the ancient world, principally as an aid to letter-writers (Malherbe 1988). The handbook entitled *Epistolary Types* (falsely ascribed to Demetrius of Phaleron and probably dating from the second or first century BCE) enumerates, describes, and provides examples of no fewer than twenty-one types of letters. Another handbook, *Epistolary Styles* (wrongly attributed to Libanius or Proclus, but belonging to the fourth–sixth centuries CE), works with an even larger scheme of forty-one types. A more general ancient treatise, *On Style* (also wrongly attributed to Demetrius of Phaleron), discusses literary style generally, but devotes a lengthy section to epistolary style in particular (223–35).

Letters are perhaps most usefully distinguished according to their purposes. Broadly speaking most letters have one of the following purposes: to sustain or nurture personal relationships (the familiar letter), to communicate orders or instructions (the official letter and, to some extent, the business letter), to make requests (the letter of petition or recommendation), or merely to convey information. Correspondingly, the major types of letters were the familiar letter (written to a friend or family member), the official letter (and to some extent the business letter), and the letter of request (petition or recommendation). To these must be added the literary letter, which employed the letter for the exposition of intellectual topics in high style and with a view to a broad readership.

The ancient epistolary handbooks, along with passing comments of some ancient letter-writers, are valuable for the insights they give into the prevailing theory and practice of letters and letter-writing, especially letters of the private, familiar type. They assume that the personal and private letter from one friend to another is the original and normative form of correspondence. Because a letter in its nature presupposes the separation of the writer and recipient and stands as a surrogate for their presence to each other, its principal purpose is to mitigate their separation by the expression and cultivation of friendly relations (*philophrosune*), by the eager anticipation of renewed presence (*parousia*), and by providing (written) conversation (*homilia*) in the interim (Koskenniemi 1956: 34–47; cf. Thraede 1970). The handbooks advise that, because it is a substitute for familiar conversation between friends, a letter should resemble an actual conversation as closely as possible, being immediate and natural in tone. Moreover, a letter should bring into play the personalities and dispositions of writer and recipient, so that as far as possible the writer might convey to the reader something of his personal presence (Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales* 1: 263–4).

Of course, not all ancient letters had this familiar character or aimed to nurture friendship. Many official letters have been preserved from antiquity. Whether administrative, diplomatic or military, their purpose was to convey rulings, orders, instructions, admonitions or simply information from persons in authority to their distant responsible agents or subjects. Naturally, being written by persons of

authority, letters of this sort are characterized by a more formal, elevated, and precise style of writing. Likewise business letters, being devoted to practical matters of commercial transaction, tended to be direct and precise, with little attention to personal details or effort to cultivate personal relationships.

The letter of request did not necessarily presuppose a direct acquaintance between the writer and addressee. The statement of request is normally accompanied by an explanation of its motivating circumstances or occasion, and is followed by an expression of appreciation or benefit, and sometimes (depending on the status of the one making the request), by an offer to return the favor. Letters of petition, in which ordinarily the writer is inferior to the recipient, tend to formal rather than familiar expression, whereas letters of recommendation, in which writer and recipient have more or less equal status, are composed in more familiar reciprocal terms.

The literary letter represents the adaptation of the letter form for broader purposes. Literary letters were themselves of the most various sorts (Aune 1987: 165–69). Some were real letters written to a specific individual, with or without having a wider readership also in view. Many examples are offered by Cicero, Seneca, Pliny, and Fronto, among others. Other literary letters were of an ideal type, written in an elevated style and intended for publication, the epistolary genre being artificially used as a literary vehicle. The poets Horace, Ovid, and Statius composed such letters. Still others were fictive letters, contrived for use within extended historical or fictional narratives. And many literary letters were letter-essays, in which the epistolary form is used for topical expositions of technical, literary, political, or philosophical questions. Such letter-essays were also composed by Seneca, Plutarch, and Fronto, among others. Of particular interest here are philosophical letter-essays which adopted the epistolary format as a medium of instruction in philosophical subjects and came into vogue in the first century CE. Such literary letters were typically much longer than ordinary letters of other types. The composition of literary letters shows the adaptation of the epistolary medium to broader purposes than the situational concerns that governed private or official letters.

The forms and conventions of ancient letters

Despite their variety of purpose and type, all ancient letters had a fundamental structure delineated by formulaic elements that were largely conventional and stereotypical (Exler 1922; White 1984: 1733–738; 1986: 198–212). Indeed one of the remarkable features of ancient letters is to be seen in the stability of their basic form and the regularity of their formulae. Letters had three fundamental parts: opening, body, and closing. The opening and closing portions both contributed mainly to the affirmation and cultivation of the interpersonal relations between the writer and recipient, while the letter body contains the particular information, request or instruction that prompts the writing of the letter. The principal purpose of any letter can usually be gauged by how these several parts of a letter are developed: elaboration of the opening and closing portions, with only brief attention to the body of the letter, shows that the letter's aim is mainly to sustain and nurture the relationship, whereas perfunctory opening and closing sections and a more detailed letter-body indicates that the aim is practical rather than personal (White 1986: 198).

At its simplest, the opening consisted of an efficient prescript (*praescriptio*) in the form 'A to B, greetings (*chairein*).’ Thus both the writer and intended recipient were immediately identified (hence ancient letters typically lacked signature at the end). Each element of this formula was susceptible of elaboration, according to situation or inclination: the names of the writer or addressee could be supplied with titles, terms of relationship, or expressions of endearment, and the statement of greeting could be heightened by modifiers. The prescript was often followed by a wish for the health and well-being of the recipient (the *formula valetudinis*): ‘if you are well, that would be excellent. I also am well’), and this often connected to a prayer formula (*proskynema*) stating a supplication made by the writer on behalf of the recipient (‘I make supplication for you always to the gods,’ etc.).

These opening conventions gave way to the body of the letter, which provided the substance of the communication. The body of the letter was its most variable component: it might comprise information, instruction, request, or admonition, according to the letter’s circumstance and purpose. Yet there are stock phrases that routinely recur in the bodies of ancient letters, depending upon a letter’s aim. For example, information is often adduced with such phrases as ‘I want you to know’ or ‘just as you instructed me,’ while requests or instructions are commonly conveyed with the phrase ‘you will do well to . . .’ usually preceded by a brief statement of the background. Other conventional phrases mark transitions to the conclusion of the body: ‘I wrote so that you may know . . .’; ‘Write (back) in order that I may know . . .’; ‘Take care in order that . . .’

Although letters sometimes concluded abruptly, they were customarily rounded off with various concluding formulae (Weima 1994: 28–56). The simplest and most common closing was a final wish, normally merely ‘farewell’ (*erroso*) or ‘may you prosper’ (*eutuchein*). But like the prescript, the final wish was open to various elaborations that expressed respect or affection, extended the scope of the wish to include others beyond the recipient, or heightened its force. Although a health-wish seems to have belonged mainly to the letter-opening, such wishes can also appear in conclusion, just before the final wish, and they typically take the form ‘Take care of yourself so that you may be healthy.’ Near the end of the first century CE there appeared the formula ‘I pray that you may be healthy,’ which did duty as a combined health wish and final wish. From the first century BCE on, greetings were increasingly added (either before or after the final wish). These greetings could be those of the writer to family members, or to friends or associates of the recipient, or they could be greetings from family members, friends or associates of the writer, which the writer conveyed to the recipient or to others associated with the recipient (Exler 1922: 116; Koskeniemi 1956: 148–50).

While letters normally ended with the final wish, many of them also carried postscripts. Lying outside the formal structure of the letter, such additional matter is usually brief, either adding information unintentionally omitted from the body of the letter, or appending a conventional element (a greeting or a health-wish) that would normally belong to the closing. But occasionally postscripts are more substantial, supplying information that has only lately come to hand, or even summarizing the main points of the letter as a whole.

The writing and delivery of ancient letters

There was no mass literacy in the ancient world: throughout the Greek, Hellenistic and Roman imperial periods, only about 10 percent of the population was literate (Harris 1989). Further, reading and writing were separate skills, and those who could write were fewer still. Hence ancient letter-writers, the illiterate by necessity and the literate for convenience, routinely relied on scribes or secretaries (Richards 1991: 15–127). A secretary possessed the accomplished skill of writing legibly on papyrus, but was also familiar with the types of letters, the appropriate styles, and the standard conventions. The sender might either dictate, syllable by syllable, to the secretary, or provide merely the gist of what was to be communicated, but in either case the letter was actually penned by the secretary. The use of secretaries clarifies two features that frequently appear in ancient letters, namely the autographic conclusion and the illiteracy formula.

In a considerable number of papyrus letters we find an autographic conclusion, that is, a visible change of hands at the end: after the secretary had penned the letter, the sender added some matter in his or her own handwriting. Sometimes this is only a repetition of the final wish, sometimes it adds a greeting, and sometimes it constitutes postscriptive remarks of substance. The motives for such autographic subscriptions were various. Authentication was certainly one of them, although this is rarely stated. Another motive, especially in certain business letters, petitions, or other official letters, was to make a letter legally binding. Still another may have been confidentiality. Such motives do not, however, suffice to explain autographic conclusions in private, familiar letters. In those cases the force of the autograph can only have been to overcome the intervention of the secretary by furnishing the letter with a more personal and intimate touch, thus acknowledging and affirming the friendly relationship of the sender and the recipient.

In this connection it should also be noted that a large number of ancient letters contain at the end an illiteracy formula, which explains that a secretary has written the letter at the commission of an illiterate person. It takes the usual form ‘X wrote for Y because Y did not know how to write’ (Exler 1922: 124–27).

The popularity of letter-writing in antiquity and the abundance of ancient letters are even more remarkable when we consider that there was no structured system for the transmission and delivery of private letters. The only organized postal systems in the ancient world were those devised by governments for purposes of official, diplomatic, and military communications. Of these the most highly developed and efficient was the Roman *cursus publicus* established by Augustus. This transport system, consisting of a network of well-maintained highways with milestones and relay stations, enabled the efficient movement of military forces, the transport of governmental officials, and the rapid transmission of administrative, diplomatic and military dispatches carried by mounted couriers (Westerman, 1938). This system was limited, however, to governmental use. Private letters had to be delivered by private means. While the wealthy could enlist their slaves or employees as couriers (*tabellarii*) for their letters, the ordinary person had to seek out traveling people, of whom there were many (Casson 1974) – business persons, friends, acquaintances or even strangers – whose itineraries included the destination of the letters (Epp 1991;

Llewelyn 1994). This haphazard, *ad hoc* procedure seems to have worked well enough: though mischance, delay and nondelivery were common, private letters apparently moved with relative ease and surprising speed around the Empire. Sometimes the mere availability of a carrier provided the occasion for a letter to be written, and when the identity of the carrier was known as the letter was being written, the carrier might be mentioned in the letter and commended to the recipient. When the carrier of a letter was known to be reliable, he was sometimes entrusted also with information, whether supplementary or confidential, to be communicated orally to the letter's recipient. Ancient letters were not routinely dated, since the carrier was usually able to indicate to the recipient when the letter had been dispatched.

EARLY CHRISTIAN LETTERS

As noted earlier, the New Testament presents us with an abundance of epistolary literature. But early Christian letters, like those of their Greco-Roman environment, are of diverse types, ranging from actual and occasional pieces of correspondence to more formal letter-essays of a literary sort. Thus we must view early Christian letters not only in comparison to non-Christian letters but also in comparison to each other.

The earliest extant Christian letters are those of the apostle Paul, which belong roughly to the decade 50–60 CE. Paul may or may not have been the first Christian to write letters, but he forcefully established the letter in Christian usage, and in large measure provided both the impetus and the model for later Christian letter-writers. Hence his letters deserve special attention.

The letters of Paul

Paul's authentic letters, far from being the abstract theological essays for which they have sometimes been mistaken, are actual pieces of correspondence. They are all occasional: they are (with the exception of Romans) addressed to individual communities that Paul himself had established, deal with specific issues that had subsequently arisen in those communities after Paul's departure, and aim to achieve particular results. That Paul's letters are actual letters was most fully and forcefully shown by Adolf Deissmann, who closely compared them with the many recently discovered papyrus letters of antiquity. On the basis of this comparison, he regarded Paul's letters as having a similarly nonliterary character, and as corresponding in the main to ancient private letters (Deissmann 1910: 146–251). In this, however, Deissmann clearly went too far (Richards 1991: 211–16). Despite some resemblances, Paul's letters are distinguished from private letters in several important ways. They have an official character, for Paul addresses his churches as a person of authority, always calling attention in the prescripts to his status as an apostle, and presuming on that authority throughout. Moreover, he addresses not individuals but communities, which he undertakes to instruct and admonish on matters of their corporate life (the letter to Philemon is not a real exception). Further, in their considerable length, argumentative development, and rhetorical features, Paul's letters more closely resemble the literary and philosophical letters of antiquity than any merely private correspondence. These features of Paul's letters must have been plain to his

sophisticated opponents in Corinth, who regarded his letters as 'weighty and strong' (2 Cor. 10:10). If Deissmann succeeded in emphasizing that Paul's letters were actual letters and in showing their resemblance to nonliterary letters, we are better able to see today that they also have strong resemblances to letters of the official and the literary types. Hence the letters of Paul fall on a continuum between the familiar and the official, and between the literary and the nonliterary (Doty 1973: 26; Stowers 1986: 25; Richards 1991: 215).

The forms and conventions of Paul's letters

Paul was naturally dependent upon the epistolary practices of his day. This is easily recognized in the structure of his letters and in the conventions he employed. In his letters Paul conforms to the basic structure of all ancient letters (opening, body, and closing), and follows but also consistently adapts the formulaic elements of ancient letters. The prescripts of Paul's letters correspond to the common pattern 'A to B, greeting,' but Paul variously elaborates each of these elements with descriptive characterizations of himself and of the church addressed, and in place of the common statement of greeting he consistently declares upon his readers the specifically Christian blessing 'Grace (*charis*) and peace (*eirene*) from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' This double-wish seems to combine the common Greek epistolary greeting (*chairein*) and the standard greeting of 'peace' in Jewish letters.

The prescript, which is sometimes lengthy (e.g. Rom. 1:1–7), is commonly followed by another formal element, the thanksgiving (replaced by the formula of blessing in 2 Cor. 1:3–7; cf. Eph. 1:3–10) (Schubert 1939). The thanksgiving is effectively a prayer that takes the place of the prayer-wish for the health of the recipient (the *formula valetudinis*) in ordinary letters (although a few papyrus letters incorporate also a formula of thanksgiving, 'I give thanks to the gods . . .' [Schubert 1939: 158–79]). Here Paul expresses gratitude for the community, its well-being, faithfulness and growth. (Only in Galatians is this element omitted, and understandably, since Paul finds nothing in that community for which to be grateful.) Functionally the thanksgivings affirm the relationship between Paul and the community and engender the goodwill and receptivity of the readers toward the writer and his message.

The thanksgiving leads to the body of the letter, the beginning of which is customarily signaled by a formula of disclosure ('I want you to know . . .' [Phil. 1:12], 'we do not want you to be ignorant . . .' [2 Cor. 1:8], 'You yourselves know . . .' [1 Thess. 2:1]), but occasionally by a formula of appeal ('I appeal to you . . .' [1 Cor. 1:10; Phlm. 8–9]), though Paul can also proceed directly to a strong statement of his theme (Rom. 1:16–17; Gal. 1:6). The body of the letter is its most important and longest part, for here Paul conveys or requests information, and deploys instruction and argument. But in substance the body of the Pauline letter is also its most variable part, since the letters are occasional and each responds to a different set of circumstances or issues. A sense of the possible range and character of the letter body can be gained by comparing Romans and 1 Corinthians. In the former we find an almost seamless argument that develops on a grand scale the theme of the revelation and outworking of God's righteousness, while in the latter we have a somewhat

disjunctive series of smaller instructions and arguments on a variety of particular topical issues that the Corinthian community has brought to Paul's attention.

By way of conveying his thought Paul employs in the body of his letters not only a variety of typical epistolary formulae and themes, but incorporates citations of and arguments from scripture, and draws upon early Christian confessional, paraenetic, and liturgical traditions (credal and hymnic elements, virtue and vice lists, benedictions, doxologies). Beyond these, however, recent research has usefully shown that the argumentative and dialogical portions of the letter-body are also shaped under the influence of the rhetorical traditions of Greco-Roman antiquity, and reflect different types of oral argumentation (Kennedy 1984; Stowers 1981; Murphy-O'Connor 1995: 65–95). Given that Paul's letters, like all letters, are surrogates for personal presence and oral delivery, it is only to be expected that the forms and the techniques of oral communication cultivated in the practice of ancient rhetoric should be present in Paul's letters, whether or not Paul had been formally trained in rhetoric. Yet Paul's argumentation does not consistently conform to any one of the main types of rhetorical argument; rather he uses them variously in contexts where they are specially servicable to his purpose.

The body of the Pauline letter is often rounded off with moral exhortations and appeals (Rom. 12:1 – 15:13; Gal. 5:1 – 6:10; 1 Thess. 4:1 – 5:22), and often also with a statement of his reasons for writing and/or of his intention either to send an emissary or to make a personal visit to the recipients (Rom. 15:14–33; 1 Cor. 16:1–11; 2 Cor. 12:14 – 13:13; Phlm 21–2). These last elements refer, in order of ascending importance, to the three modes of Paul's apostolic *parousia* or presence to his congregations: the letter, the emissary, and Paul himself (Funk 1967: 258–61). Here Paul's personal presence and authority come explicitly to the fore, and he thus induces his readers to attend to his instruction. At the same time, Paul, like other ancient letter-writers, reveals his awareness of the letter as a substitute for personal presence and conversation.

The closing of the Pauline letter, like the prescript, consists largely of formulaic elements, though here too Paul distinctively Christianizes such elements and adapts them to his own purposes (Weima 1994: 77–155). The most typical and uniform features of Paul's letter-conclusions are the grace benediction ('The grace of the [our] Lord Jesus [Christ] be with you [all]'), which consistently occupies the final position, and the wish of peace ('The God of peace be with you,' with elaborative variations), which stands earlier in the closing. Between these two elements other elements frequently appear. The most frequent of these are final greetings, including the request that the addressees also greet each other with an exchange of the 'holy kiss.' The conclusions of Paul's letters sometimes also include a greeting or other statement in Paul's own hand (1 Cor. 16:21–4; Gal. 6:11–18; Phlm. 19; cf. Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17–18). Such explicit references to his own hand point to Paul's frequent, and probably habitual, use of a secretary for the inscription of his letters (Richards 1991: 169–201; Rom. 16:22 preserves the name of one of Paul's secretaries, Tertius). Paul himself then penned some part of the conclusion. For the motive of these autographic interventions we need look no further than common practice, since papyrus letters frequently reveal similar autographs. The appearance of the author's own hand reemphasized the personal character of the letter, though we

should not discount such additional aims as authentication (cf. esp. 2 Thess. 2:2), accountability (Phlm 19), or strong emphasis (Gal. 6:11).

The writing and delivery of Paul's letters

It is noteworthy that in the prescripts of his letters Paul customarily names another (or others) as co-senders with himself (among the authentic letters only Romans lacks a co-sender). This is apparently no mere formality, but indicates that these co-senders participated in the conception and perhaps even the composition of Paul's letters. As the letters themselves make clear, these persons (Timothy, Silvanus, Sosthenes, among others) belonged to Paul's missionary entourage and were his fellow-workers, assisting him in organizing and overseeing his congregations, often traveling as envoys between Paul and his churches, and sometimes, no doubt, carrying his letters as well as oral instructions (Ellis 1971; Ollrog 1979). This group structure of the Pauline mission has encouraged some scholars to speak of a Pauline 'school,' whose work under Paul's leadership probably included not only administrative and ambassadorial tasks, but also the study of scripture and interpretive reflection upon the gospel message (Schenke 1975; Conzelmann 1965, 1979). The substance of Paul's thought as we meet it in his letters, while it bears the unmistakable impress of Paul's own mind, must also have owed much to these co-workers.

Paul's reliance upon his fellow-workers and his use of secretaries opens up the possibility that his letters may have been composed and inscribed in various ways. Some letters may have been dictated to a secretary skilled in shorthand. At the other extreme, Paul may have entrusted the rough drafting of a letter to his associates or a secretary. The former method could account for the vividly oral style of Romans or of 1 Corinthians 10–13. Appeal is sometimes made to the latter method to explain why some Pauline letters vary so widely from others in language, style, or thought. Yet the basic consistency of style and substance among the undisputed letters of Paul argues for his own close control over the content and formulation of his letters, however much assistance he may have gained from members of his entourage.

Paul's letters were delivered by private letter-carriers, and these are frequently named and commended in the letters themselves: Phoebe (Rom. 16:1–2), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25–9), Onesimus (Phlm. 12), Timothy (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10) Titus and another unnamed (2 Cor. 8:16–24), among others (cf. Col. 4:7–9; Eph. 6:21–2). If not all of these were among Paul's closest associates, they were all surely trusted Christians, and it must have been rare for messages between Christians to be transmitted by non-Christians. With Christian as well as non-Christian letters, the letter-carrier was often entrusted with additional information (Col. 4:7–9; Eph. 6:21–2), and sometimes was in a position to assist in the interpretation of the letter (1 Cor. 4:17).

It was Paul's intention and expectation that upon reaching their destinations his letters would be read aloud to the congregations addressed (1 Thess. 5:27; cf. Col. 4:16). This was the common mode of reading in antiquity, and would have been necessary in any event since the large majority of Christians, like the majority of non-Christians, were illiterate. Correspondingly, Paul's letters, like all ancient literature, were composed not so much to be read as to be heard, that is, recited or

performed (Achtmeier 1990; Botha 1993), which accounts for their oral style and rhetorical features.

The role of Paul's letters and their later influence

All of Paul's letters are occasional in nature: they are directed to individual communities that Paul himself had established, and they address specific issues that had arisen in those communities after Paul had departed to work elsewhere. (The letter to the Roman church, which Paul did not establish, is also occasional, though its occasion lay with Paul.) But if his letters were occasional, they were by no means casual. They were important and practical instruments of his itinerant missionary activity, and were carefully thought out and composed to be effective means by which he might instruct, guide, and regulate his congregations when he was absent from them.

We cannot easily judge whether Paul's letters achieved their intended purposes. Paul clearly thought them useful, and undoubtedly they conveyed his ideas and intentions. Yet they were not always successful: one of Paul's missives to the Corinthians was clearly misunderstood (1 Cor. 5:9–13), and another caused painful reaction (2 Cor. 2:3–9; 7:8–12) which led to further difficulties. For most of his letters it is simply impossible to know if they had the results that Paul hoped for when he wrote them – whether, for example, the Galatians were dissuaded from their judaizing inclinations, or whether the Romans were prepared to welcome Paul and support the western mission he projected. It is, however, a more general measure of success that, despite their specific addresses and occasional character, most of Paul's letters came to be valued and preserved, and were soon widely disseminated among other churches both within and beyond Paul's own mission field. It was in consequence of this that Paul's letters had their greatest influence. At the same time, Paul's practice served to inaugurate the long and broad tradition of letter-writing in Christianity. The availability and usefulness of Paul's letters fostered the idea that the appropriate and even expected medium of written Christian teaching was the letter. More particularly still, Paul's letters effectively created the genre of the apostolic letter, and this genre quickly took hold within early Christianity (White 1983).

Pseudo-Pauline letters

The effect of this is first to be seen, not surprisingly, within the Pauline mission field. Among the letters traditionally ascribed to Paul, some are clearly pseudonymous, written by others but in Paul's name. Those widely agreed to be pseudonymous are Ephesians and the Pastoral epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus), but many also consider Colossians and/or 2 Thessalonians not to be genuine. These letters may be variously differentiated from the apostle's authentic letters on the grounds of vocabulary and style, characteristic religious ideas, and situation, though in varying degrees they are all indebted to the tradition of Paul's thought. But whereas all of Paul's letters were addressed to individual local communities and had specific relevance to them, this is not the case with all of the pseudo-Pauline letters. Ephesians appears not to have had a particular original address, and thus had an encyclical

character, envisioning a very broad readership, and the general character of its contents corresponds with this. The Pastoral epistles, on the other hand, are unique among the Pauline letters in being addressed only to individuals, ostensibly to Paul's associates, Timothy and Titus (Philemon, an authentic letter, was addressed not only to the individual, Philemon, but also to the community that met in his house). But in spite of their individual addressees, the Pastoral epistles were probably intended for a broad readership, since they aim to encourage fidelity to Pauline teaching and its transmission to others, to strengthen resistance to false teaching, and to sponsor a structured form of church organization and authority. Colossians and 2 Thessalonians, on the other hand, both have particular circumstances in view, and were probably written to specific communities rather than for an entirely general readership. In these documents we have early examples of pseudonymous apostolic letters.

The composition of pseudonymous letters (among other sorts of pseudonymous works) was a familiar practice in Greco-Roman antiquity generally (Speyer 1971; Brox 1975) and was sometimes followed both in Judaism (Smith 1971; Alexander 1984) and in early Christianity (Brox 1975; Meade 1986). Within Christianity this occurs first in connection with the name of Paul. The motives of fictive authorship were various. The production of pseudonymous letters in Paul's name and after his time may perhaps be understood against the background of the corporate character of Paul's missionary efforts, noted previously. Some of his close associates certainly survived him, and after his death no doubt sought to continue his work. It is probably to this group, and their successors, that we should look for the origins of the pseudo-Pauline letters. The various authors of these letters were clearly acquainted with Paul's thought, presumed upon Paul's authority, and under his mantle aimed both to perpetuate his teaching and adapt it to new circumstances after the apostle's demise. The production of these letters not only takes for granted the importance of Paul's thought and the weight of his authority, but shows also that the letter had early become the acknowledged, expected, and effective medium of Pauline teaching.

Despite the curious failure of Acts to represent Paul as a writer of letters, allusion to that role was entirely commonplace in reminiscences of Paul in the late first and early second centuries (2 Peter 3:15–16; 1 Clement 47:1–3; Ignatius, *Eph.* 12:2; Polycarp, *Phil.* 3:2). The knowledge of Paul as a letter-writer and the early and apparently broad influence of his letters had a still larger consequence: it fostered a close association in early Christian thought and practice between the letter and apostolic teaching, such that the letter became the expected vehicle of authoritative instruction. This provides a perspective from which to examine other early Christian letters.

Hebrews and the catholic epistles

The so-called Epistle to the Hebrews, which has traditionally been associated with the Pauline corpus, is something of a literary enigma: although it has a clearly letter-like conclusion (13:22–5), it has no epistolary introduction at all, so that there is some ambiguity about its genre and no indication of its ostensible author or intended recipients. Beginning with a formal prologue (1:1–4), this document reads much more like a carefully composed, highly rhetorical homily than a letter proper, and

indeed it is self-described as a 'word of exhortation' (13:22). While it is conceivable that an original epistolary introduction has been accidentally lost or deliberately eliminated, it is more likely that the epistolary conclusion was added, either by the author of the whole or someone else, possibly to suggest Pauline authorship or at least a connection with Paul's circle (note the reference to 'our brother Timothy' in 13:22). Thus, although Hebrews was certainly not written by Paul and is not to be considered a letter in any compositional sense, we nevertheless see even here, as in the pseudo-Pauline letters, an interest in associating the substance of this document with the Pauline epistolary tradition. Hebrews would appear, then, to have been written not as a letter but as a hortatory address for a particular group of Christians. This does not, however, preclude its subsequent adaptation and broader distribution, perhaps by the author himself, in letterlike form. Similar peculiarities attach to some other New Testament letters.

The four letters appearing under the names of Peter, James, and Jude, together with three other letters that are traditionally associated with the name of John, but are actually anonymous, have been known at least since the fourth century as the catholic (that is, universal) epistles, and prior to that time two individual letters among these (1 Peter; 1 John) had been described as catholic. The designation was apparently employed because it was thought that these letters were written not to local congregations but to a wider, more general readership. The addresses of most of these letters are indeed quite general: 1 Peter is directed to 'the exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappodocia, Asia, and Bythinia' (1:1) – which is to say, to Christians in the Anatolian regions of Asia Minor; still more general are the addresses of 2 Peter ('to those who have obtained faith,' 1:1), James ('to the twelve tribes of the dispersion,' 1:1), and Jude ('to those who are called, beloved in God and kept for Jesus Christ,' 1:1). The three Johannine letters present a more varied picture: 1 John lacks any address at all, while 2 John is addressed to an unnamed local church ('the elect lady,' 1:1), and 3 John to an individual (Gaius, 1:1). With the exception of 2 and 3 John, then, the catholic epistles are characterized by general addresses and appear to envision broad readerships, which contrasts sharply with Paul's practice of writing to particular, local congregations, though some of the pseudo-Pauline letters (e.g. Ephesians) are much more generally conceived. It corresponds to their broad addresses that most of the catholic epistles communicate teaching of a general type that seems to take little or no account of the local circumstances of any particular community, although even teaching of general relevance may also have been addressed to an individual church (Bauckham 1988: 488).

Like Hebrews, not all of the catholic epistles were self-evidently composed as letters. One of them, 1 John, has neither an epistolary address nor an epistolary conclusion and thus lacks most of the formal features that would mark it as a proper letter. The rest of these letters all begin with relatively standard epistolary conventions, and thus immediately create the impression that they are letters, yet a regular epistolary conclusion is lacking not only in 1 John but also in 2 Peter, James, and Jude. Of all the catholic epistles, 1 Peter has the most vividly letterlike quality, and by its full use of epistolary conventions leaves no real doubt that it was composed as a letter. At the other extreme is 1 John, which lacks all the recognizable marks of a letter. Yet the author of 1 John repeatedly uses the formula 'I am writing' (1:4;

2:1, 7, 12, 21, 26; 5:13), and thus conceives of his work as a written communication rather than an oral address. Hence, whether or not some of these documents (or parts of them) may originally have been composed as sermons, or ever had a nonepistolary form, it would be a mistake to conclude from their general character that they were not actually dispatched as letters and meant to be widely read.

The catholic epistles as a group have no explicit relationship to the tradition of Pauline thought (although 1 Peter and James are occasionally resonant of Pauline teaching), nor do they follow the style, form or conventions of the authentic Pauline letters. Lacking the personal dimension and situational specificity of Paul's letters, some of the catholic epistles (especially James, 2 Peter, 1 John, and Jude) bear a closer comparison with some Greco-Roman literary or philosophical letters, which have a similarly didactic quality without reference to particular circumstances. Yet in one respect we should probably see in the catholic epistles an important after-effect of Paul's letter-writing practice. Apart from the three letters associated with the name John (which, however, are actually anonymous), the catholic epistles are associated with the names of apostolic figures (Peter, James, and Jude). There are good reasons in each case to think that these are all pseudonymous writings. If so, these letters attest an established expectation that authoritative apostolic teaching should be found in letter-form, an expectation that must have rested mainly upon a wide knowledge and use of Paul's own letters in the early church (White 1983).

Later, in the second century, a Christian writer named Apollonius claimed that a heterodox Christian named Themiso 'dared to write a catholic epistle in imitation of the apostle' (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.18.5). This charge indicates that the catholic epistle had become a recognized literary genre in the ancient church and, even though the apostle who was imitated is not named, shows how closely the early Christian mind had come to correlate apostolic authority and catholic address. By this time, to write as an apostle meant to address the church at large, and, correspondingly, to address the whole church meant to write as an apostle. It is very likely that the apostle intended by Apollonius was none other than Paul, for even though, strictly speaking, none of Paul's authentic letters had a general or catholic address, they had come to be valued and used by the whole church, despite their original particularity (Dahl 1962). Indeed, this view seems already to be presupposed in the pseudonymous catholic epistles, and becomes explicit in 2 Peter 3:15–16.

Revelation

It is not immediately evident that the Apocalypse of John should be regarded as a letter. The author himself refers to his work as a prophecy (1:3), a book (1:11) or, more frequently, a book of prophecy (22:7, 10, 18–19), never simply as a letter. It commences not with epistolary formulae but with a title, a warranting explanation of the book's origin, and a blessing (1:1–3). Yet immediately thereafter we come upon an epistolary prescript of common form, 'John to the seven churches that are in Asia,' and a typically Christian (indeed, Pauline) epistolary greeting, 'grace to you and peace . . .' (1:4–5). Correspondingly, at the conclusion of the book we find a benediction of the type that regularly concludes early Christian letters (22:21). Thus,

even though in its larger substance the Apocalypse is a revelatory narrative, it is cast in the form of a letter. In this respect the Apocalypse of John is unique among Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings.

But the Apocalypse is also peculiar as a letter, for like no other letter it aims at once to address both a specific and a general readership. It is directed to a circle of seven specific churches in Western Asia Minor – Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelpia, and Laodicea – and thus is a circular letter aimed in the first place at all of them equally. Within this framework, however, the author also undertakes to address these congregations individually, and so incorporates into the general letter specific messages for each (2:1 – 3:21). Yet the intended readership was probably broader than even these seven churches: the number seven was taken in Judaism and Christianity as a symbol of perfection and completeness, so that seven individual churches might signify also the whole church. In a document as given to number-symbolism as the Apocalypse, it seems probable that the author intended his work to address Christians at large.

This strange conflation of an apocalypse into a letter that is both general and specific finds its explanation in the instruction to the seer to ‘write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches’ (1:11). The revelation is provided to John in order that he should ‘bear witness’ to it (1:2), that is, make it widely known. Until and unless the revelation is communicated, the revelatory process remains incomplete and ineffective: only dissemination – writing and sending – brings it to completion. ‘Writing and sending’ most naturally indicates a letter. In this sense, the epistolary form is by no means incidental or irrelevant, but belongs to the fundamental conception and purpose of the work. The whole of the book should therefore be considered a circular letter addressed to seven specific churches, yet not only to them.

Early Christian letters display a rich diversity of form, substance and function. Our understanding of them is much enriched by comparisons with other letters of Greco-Roman antiquity – literary and nonliterary, familiar and official, occasional and general – yet they do not correspond precisely to any non-Christian types of letters, but represent mixtures of standard types and draw upon diverse models. Not only are Christian letters as a rule much longer than ordinary letters, a feature undoubtedly related to their instructional purposes (White 1986: 19). They also reflect in notably vivid ways the unique socioreligious setting of the early church by which they were shaped, but which they also helped to shape: small religious communities separated geographically but bound together by a means of written communication that sustained their common faith, their mutual affection, and their social solidarity as one universal Church.

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PART III

DOCUMENTS



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CHAPTER TWELVE

TEXT AND VERSIONS

The Old Testament



Carmel McCarthy

INTRODUCTION

Various factors in modern times have deepened our understanding of how biblical books were created and compiled, preserved and transmitted. The more significant of these include the Dead Sea Scrolls (from 1947 onwards), and further textual discoveries in the Judean desert. Also important are the Genizah manuscripts uncovered in Cairo at the end of the nineteenth century. Analysis of their contents has stimulated fresh insights in relation to already existing textual sources, while also expanding our understanding of biblical languages.

To these unexpected discoveries of ancient texts, and their impact on contemporary theory and practice in the field of textual criticism of the Bible, must be added the various advances of modern technology. These permit greater accuracy both in the reproduction of manuscripts and in the compilation of critical editions, while developments in computer software have produced invaluable tools that facilitate research in the textual data themselves. Also significant in furthering our understanding of biblical texts are the more refined methodologies in Old Testament textual criticism, which are constantly being updated and tested in light of the new data. When all of these factors are taken into account the modern biblical student is better positioned to appreciate more fully the importance of a solid textual basis for interpreting the great wealth and wisdom contained in these time-hallowed texts.

Furthermore, an understanding of the history of the biblical text's transmission highlights the care with which the believing communities, both Jewish and Christian, preserved their sacred heritage. A study of textual origins also helps to illuminate the processes whereby certain 'books' were recognized as 'canonical' or authoritative for a particular community, while others, for one reason or another, were excluded from the normative lists. Finally, the variety and complexity of the textual material heightens the challenges facing both editors of critical editions of the biblical texts and those who seek to translate them authentically into a vast range of vernacular languages for modern readers.

THE HEBREW TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The pre-textual situation

The Hebrew text that forms the basis of contemporary critical editions and translations of the Bible reached its final stage in medieval times after many centuries of careful transmission. Usually referred to as the Masoretic Text (hereinafter MT), from a Hebrew word, *masorah*, meaning tradition, and linked with a body of medieval Jewish scholars called Masoretes, its prehistory reaches back into ancient times – its beginnings shrouded in mystery. Therefore, rather than speak of the ‘original’ text of the Hebrew Bible, it might be more helpful to view the coming into being of the biblical text that we possess today as having occurred in approximately four main phases, the first of which is least accessible (Barthélemy 1982: *68–9).

This earliest phase could be described as consisting of oral or written units in forms as close as possible to those that would have formed the ‘original’ literary production of the different books of the Bible in their final form, the circumstances and length of time for the coming into being of these units varying considerably from book to book. In some instances it might even be argued that there may have existed more than one ‘original’ form for a given book or biblical unit. Literary analysis of the existing text may help to disclose some of these units and give some clues regarding their preliterate history, but such reconstructions remain tentative in the absence of adequate evidence concerning ‘original’ compositions.

The earliest attested text

A second phase in the development of the Hebrew text that forms the basis of contemporary critical editions is more tangible and consists of the earliest form or forms of the text that can be determined by the application of the techniques of textual analysis to the existing textual evidence. This can be called the ‘earliest attested text’. While for the most part there would not have been major discrepancies between the content of phases one and two, this distinction between the ‘earliest attested text’ and so-called ‘original’ texts is both useful and necessary for the task of the textual critic. As will be explored in greater detail below, one of the objects of biblical textual criticism is to try to establish, on the basis of existing textual evidence, what is most likely to have been the form or forms of this second phase of the textual development of the MT. To reach back further and, without supporting textual evidence, reconstruct ‘original’ readings for those sections of the biblical text that appear to be corrupt or inadequately preserved belongs to the realm of hypothesis and conjecture.

The Proto-MT and the MT

The third phase consists of the consonantal text as authorized by influential circles in Judaism shortly after 70 CE. This phase is often referred to retrospectively as the Proto-MT, since it was this form of the text that was subsequently adopted by Jewish

communities from the second century CE onwards, and in due course brought to its final form by the Masoretes in the ninth and tenth centuries CE, through the addition of vowel pointing, accentuation and certain paratextual elements.

This fourth and final phase constitutes the MT properly so-called, and, while it is more or less identical with the text that exists in the principal manuscripts associated with the Masoretes of Tiberias in Galilee, it must be remembered that no manuscript of the Bible presents an entirely unified Masoretic tradition, and that no one textual source in itself fully represents the MT. Rather, what exists in the medieval manuscripts is a group of Masoretic Texts, each representing varying attempts to provide the Bible with a *Masorah* and a consistent vocalic system. The selection of the particular textual form destined to become the MT is linked with socio-religious and historical factors relating to the first century CE, and that it was chosen at that time by a central stream in Judaism in preference to other extant texts does not necessarily imply that it thereby contains the best text of the Bible in every respect (Tov 1992a: 24). Indeed, there are certain instances where the Septuagint or some of the Qumran texts reflect a textual reading superior to that of the MT. But, because of the meticulous attention given by the Masoretes to preserving this particular form of the text in all its detail over the centuries, it can be said to represent the most accessible, reliable and commonly used form of the Hebrew Bible.

The contribution of the Masoretes

In giving a brief overview of the unique role of the Masoretes in the stabilization and transmission of the Hebrew text a distinction must be made between the consonantal text attested in Second Temple sources (mainly between 250 BCE and 70 CE) – the principal component of the MT – and all the other elements that the Masoretes progressively added to it (collectively known as the *Masorah*). Thus, while the medieval form of the MT is relatively late, its consonantal base reflects a very ancient textual tradition, in existence for over a thousand years, and strikingly well preserved. The closeness of the better-quality medieval manuscripts to the earliest attestation of the consonantal form of the MT (in many but not all Qumran texts) illustrates just how carefully the MT was transmitted through the ages. By any standards this is a remarkable achievement, reflecting a concentrated effort to transmit the texts with the utmost precision over the centuries, and reaching its zenith in the ninth and tenth-century Tiberian families of ben-Asher and ben-Naphtali.

Apart from these two illustrious Tiberian families, who were among the most skilled and famous towards the end of the Masoretic period, little else is known about the Masoretes in any great detail. Active in the centuries preceding 1000 CE, this body of scholars was responsible for both the faithful transmission of the consonantal text and for the construction of the *Masorah*, a detailed system of vocalization and accentuation of the biblical text, together with specific rules for copying and counting letters, words and verses of the text.

According as Hebrew ceased to be a spoken language a reliable vocalization system became increasingly necessary, its main function being to eliminate uncertainty regarding the reading of the text, especially where passages or words were

susceptible to more than one interpretation. Since this included an interpretative element, the vocalization in the Masoretic manuscripts not only reflects ancient exegetical traditions, but at times incorporates the views of the Masoretes themselves.

It took a number of centuries to perfect the vocalization system and for the eventual supremacy of the Tiberian system as refined by Aaron ben-Asher in the eleventh century. Three main systems were developed for the MT, all of them so respecting the integrity of the consonantal text that vowel signs and accents were only added either above or below the consonants. With time, according as the Tiberian system became authoritative, it slowly replaced the other systems (Babylonian and South-Palestinian).

In addition to creating and perfecting the vocalization system, the Masoretes were also responsible for certain paratextual elements and the *Masorah* proper. The paratextual elements included traditions concerning paragraphing, verses divisions, and a number of other scribal signs, the original functions of which are sometimes unclear. Their aim was to preserve the MT in all its details, including its special characteristics, its inconsistent orthography and even its errors!

The word *Masorah* in the narrow and technical sense of the word refers to an apparatus of instructions for the writing of the biblical text and its reading. This apparatus consists of two main parts, the *Masorah parva* (Mp) and the *Masorah magna* (Mm), as well as an appendix at the end of each book or discrete section, called the *Masorah finalis* (Mf). The Mp consists of an extended set of notes written in Aramaic on the side margins and is concerned with specific occurrences of spellings or vocalizations, certain paratextual elements, and special or peculiar features such as the middle verse of a book, or words that occur in pairs, and such like. In a large number of instances – ranging from 848 to 1,566 according to the different traditions – the Mp indicates that one should disregard the written form of the text (*ketiv*, what is written) and read instead a different word or words (*qere*, what is read) supplied in the margin. In the majority of these instances the actual meaning of the text in question was not affected, but the device illustrates the degree to which the Masoretes were unwilling to change or correct the consonantal text, even when they disagreed with it.

The Mm is written on the upper and lower margins of the biblical manuscripts, and, closely linked to the Mp, its function is to elaborate in greater detail what the marginal Mp notes allude to. The Mf contains various lists, such as lists of the number of verses, letters, or words in the different biblical books.

Although the details of the Mp and Mm differ slightly from one manuscript to the next, and even though there are some inconsistencies in the notes within a single manuscript, the overall accuracy of content and cross-referencing contained in the *Masorah* is simply astounding. Created and developed long before chapter and verse numbering was introduced into the Bible in the thirteenth century via the manuscript tradition of the Vulgate, the *Masorah* could be called a kind of computerized database centuries before such concepts were to become part of today's vocabulary.

Manuscripts of the Hebrew text

Sometimes designated as ‘crown’ (*keter* in Hebrew), certain manuscripts enjoyed the status of ‘model’ codices for the study of the text and *Masorah* as developed by the ben-Asher family. A number of these have survived to the present day and are foundational for critical editions of the printed Hebrew Bible. Of these the oldest is the Cairo Codex of the Prophets. Written and provided with vowel points by Moses ben-Asher in 896 CE, it is the oldest dated Hebrew Old Testament manuscript now extant. Containing both Former and Latter Prophets, its text and *Masorah* have been edited in a series at Madrid under the direction of F. Pérez Castro (1979–).

The Aleppo Codex was originally a complete Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament, provided with vowel points and accents by Aaron ben-Moses ben-Asher (c. 930 CE). Given first to the Karaite community in Jerusalem, its fame is largely due to the fact that Maimonides (d. 1240) declared it to be the authoritative text of the Bible. Its presence in Aleppo is attested from 1478, but anti-Jewish rioting there in 1947 resulted in its being badly damaged, and for a time it was thought to be irretrievably lost. It reached Israel in 1957 in a less than complete form (lacking the Pentateuch up to Deut. 28:17, as well as certain other sections). It has been chosen as the base text for the *Hebrew University Bible (HUB)* and for the new edition of the *Mikra’ot Gedolot ‘Haketer’* (Cohen 1992).

The Leningrad Codex (dated 1009 CE) is recognized as the best complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible, and continues to be used as the basis for successive critical editions to the present day. Brought from the Crimea by A. Firkowitsch in 1839, it contains a scribal note indicating that it was written, vocalized and equipped with *Masorah* by Shemuel ben-Jacob from manuscripts corrected and annotated by Aaron ben-Moses ben-Asher. Other important manuscripts of high quality include Codex Or. 4445 of the British Library, dated by some scholars to the end of the ninth century, and by others to the first half of the tenth century, and Codex Sassoon 507, also known as the Damascus Pentateuch, likewise dated between the ninth and tenth centuries.

Printed editions of the Hebrew Bible

The earliest printed complete edition of the Bible can be traced back to the Soncino edition of 1488, while an edition of the Psalms with Qimhi’s commentary is earlier still (Bologna 1477). Editions up to 1525 were based on a limited choice of manuscripts, and since some of these latter are no longer extant, it is not possible to evaluate the textual reliability of these early editions. After the appearance of the first Rabbinic Bible in Venice in 1518 (the Hebrew text with *Masorah*, Targum and a selection of Jewish medieval commentators combined on folio pages), a second Rabbinic Bible was published by D. Bomberg in 1524–5. The editor of this edition, Jacob ben-Hayyim, was a careful student of the *Masorah*, but was handicapped by the modifications and refinements introduced into the tradition during the six centuries between Aaron ben-Asher and his own day. The text of ben-Hayyim became, for better or worse, the norm for nearly all printed Hebrew Bibles until recent years. Its four-hundred-year dominance has earned it the status of a type of *Textus Receptus*.

Up until 1975, with the publication in Jerusalem of the first volume of the *HUB* (the *Book of Isaiah*), the monopoly in the production of critical editions of the Hebrew text lay with the tradition associated with R. Kittel. The *Biblia Hebraica* (*BH*), which he first published in 1906, is the most widely used – and still the only complete – critical edition of the Bible. This edition (Leipzig 1906) was based on the second Rabbinic Bible, and called *Biblia Hebraica Kittel* (*BHK*₁). A revision of this edition (Leipzig 1913) soon followed (*BHK*₂). The further revision of 1929–37 marked a new departure in that it was now based on the Leningrad codex and edited in conjunction with P. Kahle (*BHK*₃). From 1951 onwards variants from the Qumran material available were included in its critical apparatus. The next revision of *BH*, usually referred to as *BHS*, under the editorship of W. Rudolph and K. Elliger, was also based on L (Stuttgart 1967–77) and has been reprinted and revised in 1984, 1987, 1990 and 1997 (and reproduced electronically in 1994). A completely new critical edition, on the initiative of the United Bible Societies and with the sponsorship of the German Bible Society, is currently underway (*Biblia Hebraica Quinta*). It continues the *BH* tradition of using L as its base and will incorporate a full Masoretic apparatus in addition to a comprehensive text-critical apparatus which, together with the versional textual evidence, will also include all the Qumran data. It is projected that this new edition will be completed in the early years of the twenty-first century.

The *HUB*, which published its first volumes in 1975 (the *Book of Isaiah*, Vols 1–2, Jerusalem 1975, 1981) and in 1998 (the *Book of Jeremiah*), has opted for the Aleppo Codex as its basic text, together with its abbreviated Masoretic notes on the right margin, and variants in the vowel and accent marks (from a small group of early manuscripts) on the left. The lower part of the page also contains three other apparatuses, the first of which cites the evidence of the versions, the second gives variants from the Qumran scrolls and from rabbinic literature, and the third lists readings from important medieval Hebrew manuscripts on a selective basis.

The British and Foreign Bible Society's edition by N. Snaith (London 1958), while not a critical edition, is based on a Lisbon manuscript of 1483. It also takes into account a small group of manuscripts principally of Spanish origin, and the resultant text is quite close to that of *BHK*.

The Samaritan (and pre-Samaritan) Pentateuch

The Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), as its name implies, contains the text of the Torah only, and constitutes normative sacred scripture for the Samaritan community, a distinctive group of people whose exact origins are unclear. Some scholars consider them to be the descendants of the people of Samaria who separated from the people of Judah in the Persian period (cf. Ezra 4:1–5), while others, on the basis of Josephus, ascribe the origin of the community as well as the building of the temple in Shechem to the period of Alexander the Great. Whatever the ambiguity regarding the dating and origins of the community itself, this does not necessarily have implications for their Torah, since the non-Samaritan (or pre-SP) substratum could well have been created prior to the establishment of the community, or alternatively the SP text could have been formalized much later.

Critical investigation of the SP tradition by European scholars dates back to 1616, the year Pietro della Valle obtained an SP manuscript in Damascus and brought it back to Europe. Copies in European libraries range in age from the twelfth to the twentieth century CE. The 'Abisha Scroll' is the oldest known exemplar (secondarily reassembled from sections of varying date – the oldest from the eleventh century CE), and is kept by the Samaritan community at Nablus. In more recent times the Dead Sea discoveries have helped considerably in reconstructing more clearly the distinctive nature and origin of this particular text tradition.

The SP is a consonantal text written in a special version of the 'early' Hebrew script as preserved for centuries by the Samaritan community. Its reading tradition is an oral one, with only a few manuscripts in recent years having been provided with a full vocalization. Its major significance for critical text studies lies in the fact that it is a Hebrew text not subject to the standardization effected by the late first century CE Jewish scholars. Its nature can be best described by a comparison with the MT from which it often deviates. The first critical classification of these differences was prepared in 1815 by Gesenius. Investigation of texts from the Judean Desert representing a Samaritan-type text has led to a better understanding of the various components of the SP. Recent scholars are of the view that it consists of two strata, a pre-SP substratum and a second layer that is relatively thin and mainly ideological in nature (Tov 1992a: 85–97).

Characteristic of the pre-SP texts are harmonizing alterations and certain linguistic and orthographic differences, while the second layer can be recognized through the presence of typical aspects of the Samaritan religion, literature and language, particularly its ideological changes concerning the place of worship (wherever Jerusalem is referred to in the MT as the central place of worship, the SP text reads Mt Gerizim in its stead).

Scholars are divided on the date of the SP, but it seems likely that it was based on an early pre-SP text similar to those found in Qumran. A palaeographical analysis of the specific version of the Hebrew script used by the Samaritans shows that the preserved texts reflect a form of the script from the Hasmonean era in the second century BCE. As already indicated above, the value of the SP text tradition lies in the fact that, often in accord with the Septuagint, it preserves ancient Palestinian readings of words or phrases that differ from the MT. Where such variants do not just simplify the MT reading or make it more explicit, they need to be evaluated individually. The Samaritan tradition therefore provides a useful and critical point of entry into the textual situation prior to the stabilization of the Proto-MT.

THE GREEK TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

LXX beginnings and theories of origins

The term Septuagint (LXX), from the Latin word for seventy (*septuaginta*), reflects a legendary story that the Torah was originally translated into Greek by seventy-two elders in seventy-two days. Although the story is recognized as fictitious, the name 'Septuagint' continues to be used and covers a variety of meanings. In its original and most specific usage it refers to the Greek translation of the Torah.

By extension it can denote the entire Jewish–Greek Scriptures. It can also cover the Christian Greek Bible, which includes six deuterocanonical (or apocryphal) books and some additions to other books. The deuterocanonical writings were excluded from the Hebrew canon at the end of the first century CE and placed in the category of books ‘which do not defile the hands’ (y. *Sanh* 28a). Finally, accepting that the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek took place in several stages from the third to the first centuries BCE, the term LXX can refer, in a technical sense, to the printed text of editions that carefully and critically seek to establish from the extant witnesses the earliest attainable texts of the Greek translations for the various books of the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as the text of the deuterocanonical books.

In seeking to uncover LXX origins it may be useful to begin by distinguishing between its legendary origin as recounted in the fictitious *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates*, and whatever may have been the actual circumstances underlying the earliest initiatives to provide a trustworthy Greek translation of the Torah for the sizeable Jewish community in Alexandria in the third and second centuries BCE. The *Letter of Aristeas* relates how a certain King Ptolemy, probably Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–247), having set out to equip his royal library with all the books in the world, was informed by his librarian that they lacked a copy of the Laws of the Jews. The king thereupon dispatched a letter to Eleazar, the high priest in Jerusalem, requesting that seventy-two learned elders, six from each tribe, be selected to provide a suitable translation of these Laws. On arrival in Egypt the translators were put to work on the island of Pharos near Alexandria. There, in a secluded and pleasant environment, and in the space of seventy-two days, they accomplished their task. The quality of their translation was highly praised by the Alexandrian Jewish community, and its status considered to be so final that a curse was to be pronounced on any who would seek in any way whatsoever to change any part of it.

While scholarly consensus accepts that the letter itself is a literary fiction, its dating and the historical circumstances underlying its composition have given rise to much debate. Views on its date range from 200 BCE to 50 CE, depending on how its purpose is understood. Some scholars argue that the letter is an apologia intended to promote and support an official Greek translation of the Torah. Others view it as propaganda directed at Greeks to show them the superiority of the Jewish religion and law. Others see it as a work intended to defend the literary activities of Alexandrian Jews against the attacks of other Jews in Palestine or elsewhere in Egypt; and, finally, others understand it, not in relation to the first official initiative to translate the Torah, but rather as propaganda against any contemporary attempts to revise an already existing translation.

In spite of this considerable variety of approaches to the *Letter of Aristeas*, there is broad consensus on the following: the events described in it relate only to the Pentateuch, which was the [first part](#) of the Jewish Scriptures to be translated into Greek; the translation was an official undertaking supported by Jewish authorities possibly for synagogue and instructional use, and done in Egypt probably in the middle of the third century or earlier; and thirdly, while the number of translators is not certain, it is highly unlikely that there were seventy-two (Peters 1992: 1096).

The LXX Pentateuch therefore bears the hallmark of having been an officially initiated and officially approved translation, made for a very specific community in

Alexandria. As a translation it is generally faithful, competent, and idiomatic, and reflects the work of about six distinct translators. For Genesis the differences between MT and LXX are relatively limited, but for Exodus through to Deuteronomy the variations are greater. The other LXX books came into being over a span of at least two centuries, their translations varying considerably in accuracy and style from one book to the next, and sometimes even within a single book. A case in point are the longer (MT, 4QJer^{a,c}) and shorter forms (LXX, 4QJer^{b,d}) of the book of Jeremiah and the pluses and minuses in 1–2 Samuel (Pisano 1984: 283–5). A study of the individual relationship between the LXX books and the MT and, more recently, with Qumran biblical texts, has led to varying theories of origin for the LXX as a whole.

Given this complexity, it is not surprising that there have been various attempts over the centuries to unravel LXX origins. In more recent times P. Kahle questioned whether what is preserved in our LXX manuscripts is a single pre-Christian translation or an arbitrary, almost random, selection from many oral renderings, analogous to the early Palestinian Targums. Because of the diversity of witnesses to the LXX text he maintained that there never was one original translation but rather several, designed to meet the needs of specific communities. The Aristeas story, he held, was propaganda for an official revision of earlier translations, not the description of a new one (Kahle 1959).

By contrast the approach of P. de Lagarde maintained that all LXX manuscripts could be traced back to one prototype (or *Urtext*) for each of the LXX books and that variations in the manuscript traditions were due to subsequent interventions and revisions. This position is more representative of the mainstream of contemporary scholarship, notwithstanding various reservations and qualifications, and forms the working hypothesis for the Göttingen *Septuaginta-Unternehmen*, the only institute currently involved in critical LXX editions.

Earliest revisions

Traditionally the earliest identifiable or official revisions of the LXX have been associated with the names of three second-century CE Jewish scholars, Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion (whose work Origen sought to record in his Hexapla a century later). Analysis of discoveries in the Judean desert, however, has led scholars in more recent years to believe that the work of revising the LXX began much earlier than this, and that these three were merely heirs to a process already well in motion (Barthélemy 1963). It seems likely in fact that revision of the LXX translations began almost as soon as they were copied for the first time. While it is difficult to document this process satisfactorily in its earliest stages, what seems probable is, that by the second century, in reaction to the widespread (and often polemical) use of the LXX by Christians, this work of revision came to particular fruition with the production of editions intended to correct mistranslations and eliminate Christian additions. Their overall aim was to have the LXX text conform to the Hebrew text that had by then become normative in Palestine (the Proto-M).

The best known of these scholars was Aquila, a Jewish proselyte of Pontus and disciple of Rabbi Akiba. His revision took place about 128 CE and, based on strict

principles of Jewish interpretation, was extremely literal with regard to the Hebrew text, even to the extent of representing untranslatable elements such as the Hebrew object-marker. Aquila had a good knowledge of Greek, and his literalism and precision made his work particularly attractive to his Jewish contemporaries. His version was respected for many years, and impressed both Origen and Jerome, the latter even borrowing from it in the case of a few rare words. In the past, attempts were made to identify Aquila with Onqelos, the compiler of the most important of the Pentateuchal Targums, but there is no compelling evidence to support this identification.

A second revision is identified with Symmachus, and dated towards the end of the second century CE. Distinguished for its literal accuracy and use of good Greek idiom, the revision is very precise in some places, while in others it translates in keeping with the sense. Some sources (Eusebius) identify Symmachus as an Ebionite, and thus a Christian; others (Epiphanius) contend that he was a Samaritan convert to Judaism. Since there are no traces of Ebionite belief in his Pentateuch translation, it would seem that the view that he was originally a Samaritan is more reliable. He may even have been a disciple of R. Meir, since some aspects of their exegetical techniques coincide, and his revision of the Pentateuch displays a thorough knowledge of rabbinic exegesis of the time (Salvesen 1991: 297).

Theodotion, the third reviser, presents one of the more intriguing problems in modern LXX studies. According to early Christian writers, there was a historical Theodotion variously identified as an Ephesian proselyte to Judaism (Irenaeus), and an Ebionite (Jerome) who worked towards the end of the second century CE. The text on which he worked as a reviser seems, however, to have been different from the standard LXX and to have been in existence since the early part of the first century BCE. In the case of the book of Daniel, Theodotion has replaced the LXX in all but two manuscripts. This situation has led some scholars to postulate a proto-Theodotion in order to explain the presence of Theodotionic readings before the time of Theodotion.

The discovery in 1953 of a Greek Scroll of the Minor Prophets at Nahal Hever led to a rethinking in some circles of the Theodotion problem (Barthélemy 1963). Following Barthélemy, some scholars argue that a second century CE Theodotion is no longer necessary. They suggest that proto-Theodotion (or *kaige*-Theodotion)¹ was all there was, and that this reviser flourished towards the end of the first century BCE, his work being the basis for that of both Aquila and Symmachus in the light of all three being similar in so many instances.

Other scholars, recognizing that Barthélemy's thesis raised as many problems as it solved, have been more cautious and maintain that the historical Theodotion may have worked as a reviser within the tradition reflected by the earlier so-called proto-Theodotion. Questions have also been raised as to whether or not the so-called Theodotion text in Daniel is to be attributed to Theodotion, or whether the sixth column of Origen's Hexapla, traditionally considered to be Theodotion, is indeed what it has claimed to be. While there is agreement on the main characteristics of the revision as identified by Barthélemy, scholars continue to propose further refinements as the work of textual analysis continues.

Later recensions and the Hexaplaric initiative

Next to the story of Aristeas, that of Origen and the Hexapla is perhaps the best known in the history of the LXX text. A native of Egypt, and a Christian, Origen was endowed with an enormous capacity for detailed and hard work. He had the benefit of a wealthy benefactor who provided the means to facilitate his publications. The Hexapla, a massive six-columned work estimated to have numbered about 6,500 pages, was completed between 230 and 240 CE. Origen's chief purpose was to equip Christians for their discussions with Jews, who frequently appealed to the original Hebrew. Accordingly he arranged in parallel columns the following texts:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Hebrew	Hebrew	Aquila	Symmachus	LXX	Theodotion
of his day	transliterated into Greek				

In some books it is reported that he added yet more columns, which he called Quinta, Sexta and Septima. Origen's main concern was the fifth column, LXX, which he hoped to link with the Hebrew text of his day. To achieve this he borrowed from Aristarchus (217–145 BCE) certain sigla, well known and used in Alexandrian philological studies, and incorporated them into his work. Words in his LXX without Hebrew counterparts were placed between an obelus [÷] and a metobelus [⚡]. Words and passages in Hebrew without LXX equivalents were copied from another version (most often Theodotion) and inserted into the LXX column between an asterisk [✱] and a metobelus [⚡].

That would have been somewhat acceptable had the Hexapla been retained in its original form, or if Origen did only what he claimed to have done. However the situation is more complex because Origen seems to have made other adjustments without indicating them, and, in the subsequent process of copying, some of the signs were omitted, thereby sabotaging the main purpose of the endeavour.

The modern text critic seeks to get behind Origen, to identify pre-Hexaplaric readings, in order to approach in some reasonable way what might have been original LXX. Because Origen mistakenly believed that the Hebrew text available to him was identical with that from which the Greek translators worked, he unwittingly perpetuated the very confusion he tried to remove.

The Hexapla was not easily duplicated, but its fifth column containing the LXX was copied and widely circulated during the fourth century. A new recension was thereby created consisting of a mixture of Origen's Septuagint with random readings from Theodotion and Aquila. In addition, the word order of this Hexaplaric Septuagint differed in places from that of the Greek on which Origen worked, because he, believing in the primacy of the Hebrew, deliberately changed the Greek word order to conform to the Hebrew. The copying of the fifth column in isolation from the Hebrew resulted in a gradual misunderstanding of the Hexaplaric symbols, and a tendency of scribes to omit them. Consequently, many extant manuscripts show the influence of Origen's work but do not retain the Hexaplaric signs. The fifth column was translated into Syriac by Paul, Bishop of Tella, in a monastery not far

from Alexandria between 615 and 617, and is known as the Syro-Hexapla. While opinions vary as to how accurately the Hexaplaric signs and the marginal readings from Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion were copied, few question the importance of the Syro-Hexapla.

Whereas the Hexapla was copied in Caesarea for use in Palestine, two other revisions, according to Jerome, were in circulation, one for use in Egypt and the other in Antioch. Identified with Hesychius and Lucian respectively, practically nothing is known about the Hesychian recension. The more important revision is identified with Lucian, a martyr who died in 312 CE, but the ancient sources, while referring to his life and activity, give no clear indication of either the range or nature of his revision.

Seminal work in isolating traces of the text of Lucian was carried out by Ceriani, Field and de Lagarde, thereby initiating a detailed investigation into the so-called Lucianic recension. Rahlfs refined and extended this work in relation to the books of Kings, and, while several attempts were made by other scholars to identify Lucian outside Samuel–Kings, none of these has proved conclusive. Indeed for much of the Pentateuch there is no evidence of Lucian at all.

What has attracted even greater interest in more recent decades is the so-called proto-Lucian debate. Many have observed the similarity of certain texts, known to have existed before the time of the historic Lucian, to what were determined to be ‘Lucianic’ readings.² The debate on Lucian and proto-Lucian has continued into the modern period with varying positions being upheld by Rahlfs, Barthélemy, Cross and Tov (Tov 1988: 186–87).

LXX manuscripts

The earliest and most important witnesses to the LXX consist of a number of papyri containing sections of the Pentateuch for the most part, dating from the second century BCE to the first century CE. More precise data relating to their extent and dates may be obtained from the Göttingen editions where they are cited (according to Rahlfs’s numeration). Also important are the Qumran LXX fragments (Skehan et al. 1992). Among the more important later papyri are the Chester Beatty IV and V (Rahlfs 961 and 962) from the fourth and third centuries CE respectively, containing Genesis 8–46 with some lacunae, as well as Chester Beatty VI (Rahlfs 963) containing Numbers and Deuteronomy with lacunae and dating from the second or early third century CE (Pietersma 1977). Chester Beatty IX (Rahlfs 967) from about 200 CE is particularly significant because it contains the LXX for Daniel (and not the Theodotion text found in all early witnesses).

The uncial (or majuscule) manuscripts date from the fourth to the tenth centuries CE and are so called because in antiquity only majuscules or capital letters, written in sequence and without ligatures, were used for books. The uncials are the main source for our knowledge of the LXX, and the three most important of them contain all or almost all the LXX books. Codex Vaticanus (B), the best complete manuscript, dates from the fourth century and is relatively free of corruptions and influences from the revisions of LXX. Sinaiticus (S, also named Ⲛ) is likewise fourth century and usually agrees with the text of B, but it is also influenced by the later

revisions of the LXX. It was brought to Russia in the nineteenth century from St Catherine's monastery in Sinai, hence its name. Codex Alexandrinus (A) dates from the fifth century, is greatly influenced by the Hexaplaric tradition, and in several books represents it faithfully.

The tradition of joining the letters in a cursive hand gained ground from the eighth century onwards, so that hundreds of minuscule or cursive manuscripts have survived from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries. Although the minuscules are relatively late, they often preserve ancient traditions, particularly if copied from lost uncials containing a good text. Up to the eighth century, texts were written in continuous sequence, without word division, accents, breathing, or punctuation.

Printed editions of LXX

The first printed text of the complete LXX was included in the Complutensian Polyglot prepared in Spain in 1514–17. The Greek text of this Bible then formed the basis for the LXX columns of four other great polyglots (the Antwerp in 1569–72, the Heidelberg in 1586–7, the Hamburg in 1596, and the Paris in 1645). In more recent times almost all the uncials have been published in diplomatic editions, of which the two most important are those of R. Holmes and J. Parsons (Oxford 1798–1827) and A. E. Brooke, N. McLean and J. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge 1906–40).³

The Göttingen *Septuaginta-Unternehmen*, based on the principles of de Lagarde, and incorporating the work of A. Rahlfs, was established in March 1908. This series presents the reconstructed 'original' text, selected from elements found in all known sources. The idea underlying the production of this type of 'eclectic' text derives from the assumption that there once existed an original text of the LXX, but any such reconstructed text can be based only on the data known prior to the preparation of the edition (new data may require adjustments and re-evaluation of existing evidence). The first critical editions to appear in the Göttingen series were Ruth in 1922, Genesis in 1926 and Psalms in 1931, and work continues with some twenty editions available at present. Rahlfs's popular edition of the LXX based on the three major uncials was edited just before his death in 1935 and is perhaps still the most widely used edition of the LXX today. The Göttingen *Septuaginta-Unternehmen* has produced the most reliable critical editions of the Septuagint to date.

The significance of the LXX

Among the early Old Testament versions the LXX holds a unique position. Being the first authoritative attempt to translate the Hebrew Bible in a different cultural milieu, it provides insight into the art of translation and the variety of subtle and not-too-subtle ways in which texts can be reinterpreted in the process of translation. It thereby provides an understanding of how the Hebrew Bible was interpreted by Jews in antiquity. It is particularly important for uncovering the textual history of the Hebrew Bible, since any reconstruction of the Hebrew text underlying the LXX will pre-date by several hundred years the earliest complete manuscript on which our Hebrew Bible can be edited.

For the early Christians the LXX was not secondary to any other scripture – it was Scripture. It was the form in which the Old Testament was most widely circulated in apostolic times, and is the text underlying most New Testament citations of the Old Testament. It provides the context in which many of the lexical and theological concepts of the New Testament can best be understood. As well as having been the literary vehicle for the preaching of earliest Christianity to the Gentile world, the LXX has been and continues to be the liturgical Old Testament text used by Eastern Christians down through the centuries. It also contains the original text of some of the deuterocanonical books (Wisdom, 2 Maccabees) and the basic form (in whole or in part) underlying some of the others.

OTHER ANCIENT VERSIONS

The Old Latin

Since the vernacular language in the first centuries of Christian expansion in the Mediterranean world was mainly Greek, the earliest translations of the Bible into Latin were from Greek, with the exception of Jerome's Old Testament rendering from the Hebrew. Towards the end of the second century Tertullian (c. 160–220) was already using a Latin version, and, according to Jerome (d. 420), by the early fifth century it appears that there were 'as many forms of the text for Latin readers as there are manuscripts' (*Praef. in Josue*). As it appears from patristic quotations and from manuscripts, the Old Latin (OL) is not constant and contains many divergencies. We no longer possess a complete OL version, and its history might be described in terms of successive revisions according to various Greek models, together with alterations in Latin vocabulary and style deriving from the evolution of the language itself. The five books best known in the OL form are those excluded from Jerome's undertaking because he judged them non-canonical. Since these deuterocanonical books were preserved by the church in any event and became part of the Vulgate, we possess a relatively intact text for them, the product of a single translator.

The OL form of other Old Testament books, however, has survived more by way of accident than anything else, apart from the book of Psalms, which has a particularly complicated textual history. While the Pentateuch, along with Joshua and Judges, is recognizable as the work of a single translator, much of the rest has to be pieced together from various sources. These sources fall into five main categories: patristic citations; biblical manuscripts written in the period when the OL was still in use; Carolingian and medieval Bibles; glosses or additions to the translations of Jerome; and finally, biblical lessons, canticles and antiphons in early and medieval liturgical books.

The Vetus Latina Institute at Beuron (Germany) published a comprehensive inventory of extant OL manuscripts and editions of the Old Testament and OL patristic citations in 1949, and is currently engaged in providing critical editions of the biblical books. Already published are Genesis (1951–4) and Wisdom (1977–85), while Isaiah, Sirach and Song of Songs are in preparation, with some fascicules already published. Meanwhile P. Sabatier's *Bibliorum sacrorum Latinae versionis antiquae* (3 vols, Rheims, 1739–49) continues to maintain its usefulness.

The contribution of OL studies is twofold. The OL, not the Vulgate, was the Bible used and commented on by the Fathers. The earlier forms of some OL readings are older witnesses to the Greek than the preserved Greek manuscripts, and in some cases attest the Old Greek. Thus its principal value lies in its relationship with the Greek rather than with the Hebrew text of the Bible.

The Vulgate

The term Vulgate means 'common', referring to a text generally accepted as standard (cf. *koinē* in Greek), and as such was used by the Latin Fathers (including Jerome) for the non-revised text of the Greek Bible, as well as for its Latin version. It is only since the sixteenth century that the term was applied to Jerome's Latin Bible. Because of the diversity of OL texts, in 382/3 Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome (c. 342–420) to produce an authoritative Latin Bible. Jerome began with the New Testament, and after initial work on a revision of the OL form of the Old Testament, particularly in the Psalter (for which he produced two revisions, one of the OL called *Psalterium Romanum*, and one of the Hexaplaric Psalter, called the *Psalterium Gallicanum*), he then began to turn to the Hebrew as crucial for the completion of his task. To abandon the LXX as the basis for his translation was a courageous step since the Greek Bible at that time held a higher status in the Western church than did the Hebrew.

Between 390 and 405 the Latin version of the *Hebraica veritas* began to appear, beginning most likely with the Psalter (Jerome's third version, the *Psalterium iuxta Hebraicum*), then Samuel and Kings, the Prophets and Job being completed by 392. The progress of his work can be traced by his own prefaces to the various groups of books, so that he probably completed his task by about 405. His knowledge of Hebrew was good, of Aramaic slightly less so. In some respects his new translations simply increased the multiplicity and diversity he fought to eliminate.

It is important to distinguish between the work of Jerome as a translator and the subsequent creation of the Vulgate itself. Although Jerome's name is inextricably linked with the Vulgate, the latter term covers a more complex reality, including those parts of Scripture that Jerome seems not to have touched, as well as the later and multifaceted development of the Vulgate in medieval times to the present day.

Jerome's Old Testament from the Hebrew is based almost entirely on the received consonantal Hebrew text; its value in relation to the original is therefore primarily exegetical. By contrast, the various OL renderings from the Greek represent a stage in the transmission of their prototypes that often cannot be attained directly through any extant Greek manuscripts.

The Old Testament Vulgate has been critically edited by the Benedictines of San Girolamo in Rome (1889–1954) with only 1–2 Maccabees not yet published. An edition in one volume with an abridged apparatus was prepared by R. Weber (*Biblia Sacra Vulgata* 1969), its fourth revision appearing in 1994.

THE TARGUMS

According as Hebrew declined as the spoken language of the Jews in post-exilic centuries, it became necessary in synagogue liturgy to provide oral renderings in Aramaic to accompany the public reading in Hebrew of the Law and the Prophets. To preserve their distinction from the sacred texts themselves it seems that these renderings could only be made orally during the service, and not read from a scroll. The same person could not publicly read the Hebrew and recite the Targum. Targum belonged to the oral Torah, whereas the reader had to be seen to read the Hebrew from the scroll. But the Targum was not a free-standing translation to be used on its own; it was always to be heard and studied in conjunction with the original Hebrew.

Since the writing down of these Aramaic renderings was not forbidden, written Targums (*targumim*) gradually came into being. Because of this transition from oral to written transmission, and because the Targums contain paraphrase and midrashic expansions reflecting their practical purpose, it is understandable that their wording varies from place to place, with considerable variation among the different types of Targums. In no other versions of the Bible is the interpretative element as pronounced as in the Targums, a fact that reduces their value as textual witnesses.

The word 'Targum' comes from a quadriliteral root *trgm* that occurs early in Semitic languages and is attested in the world of trade and diplomacy where translation from one language to another was essential. In its one biblical occurrence (Ezra 4:7) it also means 'translate' (from Aramaic to Persian). In later rabbinic Hebrew the root was used in a restricted sense of translating the Bible from Hebrew into another language, usually Aramaic, but sometimes also Greek. Since the verb in rabbinic Hebrew could also mean simply 'to explain' a biblical verse, the term 'Targum' in some situations came to be understood as including more than translation.

Although tradition ascribes the first Targum to Ezra, it is not clear when the first Targums were actually produced. Apart from the Targum fragments from Qumran, which can be dated to the first century CE, the Targums that have been printed and studied in modern times come mostly from late manuscripts. Written Targums of Esther and of other books alluded to in the Mishnah (*Meg.* 2.1; *Yad.* 4:15) most likely antedate 200 CE, and some elements of the Palestinian Targums may reflect a second century BCE date. But the final forms of the Targumic tradition as a whole lie well into the fifth century CE onwards. Targums are extant for all books of the Hebrew Bible except Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel.

Babylonian Targums

While the basis for all extant Targums most likely originated in Palestine, two principal compilations, Targum Onqelos to the Pentateuch and Targum Jonathan to the Prophets, were reworked extensively in the Jewish schools of Babylonia around the fifth century CE. Targum Onqelos was the only Targum officially approved by the scholars of the talmudic period (before c. 650 CE). In a reworking that adapted it to the details of the standard Hebrew consonantal text, it would have lost whatever midrashic expansions and clues to variant textual readings that it may have had in

earlier times. The same may be said for Targum Jonathan to the Prophets, which has a similar history. And yet, despite this reworking, the enormous textual fluidity of the extant Targums (reflecting regional variation and a largely oral transmission over long periods) proves that official uniformity was never achieved. Both Targums have been published in new editions (Sperber 1959–62) that include variants from several extant manuscripts and from a number of early printed editions.

Palestinian Targums

Targum materials directly Palestinian in origin, while less easy to come by, are of greater significance for textual, literary and exegetical purposes. As its medieval designation ('Targum Yerusalmi') suggests, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (Ps-J) is essentially a Palestinian Targum. The most expansive of the Pentateuchal Targums (roughly twice the length of the original Hebrew text), it is a complex document combining traditions from widely different periods. Although containing elements that appear to be 'early' (before the redaction of the Mishnah and the Jerusalem Talmud), Ps-J as it now stands cannot have been redacted before the seventh/eighth century CE.

Incorrectly catalogued in the Vatican Library in 1892 as 'Targum Onqelos', Targum Neofiti (N) was identified in 1956 by Díez Macho as a recension of the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch. N contains a colophon dating it to 1054 CE, and its language has been classified as a form of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic close to the Galilean dialect of the Jerusalem Talmud (Alexander 1992: 323). Though not as expansive as Ps-J, it nonetheless contains many midrashic additions and marginal glosses, and appears to have evolved over a long period of time. There are many views as to its date, ranging from pre-Christian times (Díez Macho 1959) to the Renaissance (Goshen-Gottstein 1975). Accepting that a base text, annotated and expanded over a considerable period of time, lies beneath N, there seems to be no solid basis for dating anything in it later than the third/fourth century CE.

The Fragmentary Targum contains a variety of texts that fall into at least five groups, all containing a distinct type of Palestinian Targum in western Aramaic, and showing certain characteristics which suggest that they are interrelated (Klein 1980). Their incompleteness seems deliberate, rather than the result of accidental fragmentation.

Though aimed primarily at a popular audience, the Targums were the work of scholars well-versed in Hebrew, Aramaic, and biblical exegesis, and should not be taken as spontaneous renderings of untutored translators. Despite their present textual fluidity, the content of the Targums was to a large extent both predetermined and traditional.

Just how directly the extant written texts go back to the Targums of Talmudic times is a matter of dispute. It would be incorrect to assume that they all represent direct transcripts of the oral Targum delivered in the early synagogue. Some of the texts were recited in synagogue. However, there are others (such as Ps-J and N) whose liturgical role, at least in their present form, must be seriously questioned. They more accurately represent scholarly editions of genuine Targumic traditions put together in early medieval times as serviceable collections of early biblical exegesis.

THE SYRIAC VERSION: THE PESHITTA

The earliest translation initiatives for rendering the Old Testament into Syriac lie hidden in antiquity. With roots most likely in the Targumic tradition already in existence for western Aramaic, both their date and place of origin remain uncertain. Syriac, the literary dialect of eastern Aramaic, has been preserved in an abundant Christian literature that came into being towards the end of the second century and flourished until the fourteenth. On the analogy of Targumic origins it is possible that first/second century Jewish and Christian preachers from Palestine initiated translation processes in the district of Adiabene (near Irbil in modern Iraq), especially in Edessa (Urfa in modern Turkey). Like the LXX, the Peshitta Old Testament was not translated as a whole, but book by book, with most books possibly originating in the first/second century CE, since the Old Syriac Gospels adapt certain Old Testament quotations to the Peshitta Old Testament text.

Representing a compilation and careful reworking of these early materials, the Peshitta Old Testament was firmly established by the fifth century, an initiative linked with the name of Bishop Rabbula. There are varying views on the precise meaning of the term Peshitta, the more commonly accepted one being 'simple'. As a term it was not attested until the ninth century, when it was used to distinguish this version from the Syro-Hexapla, the other main Syriac translation in existence for the Old Testament (of seventh-century origin). Though basically a translation from a Hebrew text more or less identical with the MT, the Peshitta occasionally exhibits secondary influences from the LXX in those books most used in the liturgy (Isaiah, Psalms). Apart from Sirach, the deuterocanonical books were translated from the LXX. The Peshitta rendering of the various books of the Old Testament is uneven in quality, ranging from fairly accurate to paraphrastic. Certain books, especially the Pentateuchal ones, occasionally reflect loose connections with the Targum tradition.

Compared with the LXX, the textual history of the Peshitta Old Testament is relatively stable, and variations of any real importance are infrequent (Brock 1992: 794). Recent studies in the extant manuscripts have revealed three slightly different text forms in many of the books. The earliest stage, closest to the Hebrew, is partially represented in the rare fifth-century manuscripts. The second stage, represented by sixth to eighth-century manuscripts, is well preserved and aims for a more smoothly flowing text. This process reached a further stage in the medieval manuscripts that form the *Received Text*. The older editions contained in the Paris (1645) and London (1657) Polyglots are based on late manuscripts, and are not critical editions. The oldest complete Peshitta Old Testament manuscript (Codex Ambrosianus of the sixth/seventh century, edited by A. Ceriani in 1876) is more useful for text-critical purposes, and has been adopted as the basis for the Leiden Peshitta Institute critical editions. A number of volumes in this series have already been published, each accompanied by a detailed apparatus containing other early manuscript readings.

OTHER EARLY VERSIONS

From the point of view of the transmission of the biblical heritage the other early Old Testament versions of interest include the incomplete Coptic versions in the

Sahidic and the Bohairic dialects, and the Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian and Arabic versions. Since these represent translations from the Greek, vary in the quality of translation, and are relatively late in origin, their interest lies more in the sphere of LXX transmission-history rather than being of direct relevance for the textual history of the Hebrew Bible.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Nature and aims

Before embarking on a discussion of the procedures and practical methods of Old Testament textual criticism, one should first form an opinion on whether there once existed *one* original textual form (*Urtext*) or *several forms* of biblical books, and, secondly, what it is one seeks to achieve in attempting to determine the nature of this text or texts. The majority opinion supports the *Urtext* view, although some of the implications of this assumption have not been adequately tested (Tov 1992b). But how realistic is it to speak of the 'original' text, and how feasible is it to hope to attain it? The transmission history of the Old Testament text as outlined above shows clearly that all the witnesses stand somewhat removed from such an 'original' text, however one understands this term. A detailed comparative study of the content of the textual witnesses reveals that they not only contain a great variety of scribal errors, such as occur inevitably in any form of manuscript transmission, but also a number of variant readings that show actual transformations and changes of meaning, both accidental and deliberate.

A crucial question in investigating how the biblical text was created, how it was copied and transmitted, and how variant readings came into being is to distinguish between differences created in the course of the textual transmission, and those that derive from an earlier stage, that is, during the literary growth of a book. The work of textual criticism is properly focused only on those created during the textual transmission, while those belonging to earlier stages must remain in the domain of literary criticism (even though occasionally some traces of these may remain in the textual witnesses). As already indicated at the outset, the prehistory of our present Old Testament text lies beyond the province of textual criticism. Reconstructing the exact words of the prophets for example in their presumed 'original' form, separating the various layers of Pentateuchal traditions, investigating questions of literary integrity and the like, are among the tasks properly entrusted to literary criticism and exegesis. Perhaps a more modest goal for the text critic would lie in establishing 'the earliest attested text'. This does not mean attempting to recover the original wording of the sentences as they were first conceived, but the textual form of the Old Testament books when they attained their present shape and content and became canonical writings, the finished literary product that stood at the beginning of the textual transmission stage. It is with such a goal in view that the remainder of this section will unfold, keeping in mind that it will not always be easy to determine the precise stage in the development of a given biblical book that can be called either the *Urtext* or 'the earliest attested' text.

Since textual criticism strictly speaking deals only with attested textual evidence, the critical editions of the Hebrew Old Testament are not eclectic, but ‘diplomatic’, that is, they reproduce a particular form of the received text as the base text (L for the *BH* tradition, or A for that of the *HUB*), while recording divergent readings or variants from Hebrew and non-Hebrew sources in accompanying critical apparatuses. For theoretical as well as practical reasons this has to be the case, because, as indicated above, not all scholars agree that initially there existed only one ‘original’ text of a biblical book. By contrast, most modern translations of the Old Testament are eclectic: while basically following the MT, they replace certain MT readings with alternative ones from the versions.

Methods and procedures

Old Testament textual criticism can be divided into two sections: analysis of the biblical text as attested in Hebrew manuscripts and as reflected in the ancient versions on the one hand, and the identification, characterization and evaluation of the variant readings that emerge in relation to the MT. When all the variants are assembled from the Hebrew sources, and reconstructed from the versional evidence, they need to be evaluated. This is done through comparison with the MT without implying that the MT is automatically the best text in all instances. The aim of this comparison is to determine which, if any, of the variant readings has a better chance of representing the ‘earliest attested’ text than the others. The fact that it is not possible to decide in all instances does not invalidate the correctness of the procedure as a whole (Tov 1992b).

The evaluation of variant readings is based on a number of considerations, some of which are less objective than others. When all the different forms of a particular text are carefully compared, it becomes evident that various types of factor come into play in determining which form of the text is likely to have been more ‘original’, and which form or forms are more typically secondary. A first set of factors pertains to the *structural relationship* between the texts. Rather than *count* text traditions, one should *weigh* them. For example, if a textual variant occurs in only one tradition, the significance of this fact must be explored. On the other hand, a textual variant may appear to have a broad basis of support, in that it is represented by a number of different textual traditions; but closer examination, however, may reveal that these have all followed the same interpretative tendency (such as attempting to make an obvious improvement on some obscurity in the original text). In situations where there is dependence of a variety of text forms upon one earlier form it may be helpful to look for a ‘key’ to explain how the diverse forms have arisen. Analysis of these structural factors on their own is insufficient, and must be supplemented by one or more of the causal factors that follow below.

This second set of factors are termed *causal* in that they attempt to explain the reasons for certain alterations in the text, and cover both conscious and unconscious aspects. The conscious factors include processes such as *simplification* of the text (a natural tendency for ancient scribes and translators), and *assimilation* of the text of one passage to that of a similar or proximate passage, usually with the apparent purpose of attaining greater consistency. Both of these tendencies have given rise to

rules of thumb that, in certain situations, more difficult or shorter passages are to be preferred.⁴

Translational adjustments to the linguistic requirements of the ancient receptor languages, as well as misunderstanding of linguistic or historical data, are also ways in which a text may be consciously (or even subconsciously) altered. In other instances a particular form can be essentially interpretative, reflecting specific initiatives of ancient editors, scribes or translators to have the underlying text changed or amplified to conform to certain views, often theological in nature (McCarthy 1981). Unconscious alterations include mechanical errors such as accidental omissions of similar letters, words, or sentences, repetitions of identical sequences, and the occurrences of conflate readings and doublets.

While the foregoing is a brief attempt to indicate some of the chief considerations and guidelines that textual critics use in making textual evaluations or characterizations of variant readings, it is also true that to some extent textual evaluation cannot be bound by any fixed rules. The main task of the text critic is one of choosing 'the contextually most appropriate reading', a task that of necessity involves a subjective element (Tov 1992a: 309–10). A judicious mixture of careful analysis, intuition, and common sense in the application of the considerations described above should be the main guide. In the last analysis textual criticism is an art in the full sense of the word, a faculty that can be developed, guided by intuition based on wide experience. It is the art of defining the problems and finding arguments for and against the originality of the readings. And in that process there can sometimes be room for more than one view.

NOTES

- 1 This recensional activity was called *kaige* from the fact that this was an unusual Greek form characteristically used to render a particular Hebrew combination (*and also*).
- 2 Among these 'pre-Lucianic' readings are parts of the Old Latin version dating from the second century CE, the Peshitta version of the OT, a papyrus fragment of Ps 77:1–18 dating from the third/second century CE, certain New Testament quotations, and second-century papyrus fragments of Deuteronomy.
- 3 Based on the *Sextina Romana* edition of 1587, which in turn is based on Codex B, the former records variants from 164 manuscripts, the early translations of LXX, and the first editions of LXX. The latter, also according to Codex B, has been supplemented by A or S where B is lacking.
- 4 *Lectio difficilior potior* and *lectio brevior potior*.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

TEXT AND VERSIONS

The New Testament



David Parker

Although the authors of the New Testament writings were part of the biblical world, the story of the passing down of these writings steps in and out of many different worlds, including our own. This introduction will attempt to concentrate on the world of late antiquity in which they were written and first copied, referring less frequently to the subsequent medieval and Byzantine eras, and hardly at all to any more recent times.

The study of the texts and versions of early Christianity is a study of oral traditions and of manuscript copies. It begins with the Aramaic sayings of Jesus, and passes through Greek to Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Armenian, and eventually to our modern languages – in fact to more tongues and dialects than those listed in Luke’s account of the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. The texts include gospels, epistles, apocalypses and acts of apostles.¹ Some of these today comprise the collection called the New Testament. We should not forget that to their early compilers and users, these New Testament texts were only a part of that wider body of early Christian writings. These groups of texts (the Gospels, Epistles, Apocalypse and Acts) require somewhat different treatment, according to the nature of their origins and their character. But before this treatment can be attempted, a general description of the transmission of texts in the ancient world must be offered.

In the days before computers, before recording and before printing, the transmission of texts was very different from that known today. The most obvious difference is that the production of handwritten copies was far more laborious: one typesetting can be the source of a thousand copies; but a thousand manuscripts are the product of a thousand copyings. The second point is that each of those copyings will be unique, containing its own characteristics and its own errors. While it is possible to copy a text very accurately if one is determined enough, it is clear that the early Christians were not particularly determined in this respect. It is as though copyists took rather literally Paul’s statement that he and his colleagues were ‘ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit’ (2 Cor. 3.6). But Christianity did espouse the book quite enthusiastically. And in doing so it happened to have a significant effect on book production.

Books in the ancient Mediterranean world had traditionally taken two forms: the skin roll and the papyrus roll. Usually, the skin was parchment – animal skin (most

often of sheep or goat) treated so as to produce a fine-textured, thin material. Sometimes leather (tanned skin) was used. Papyrus was a kind of reed, grown almost solely in Egypt. Two layers of the thin-sliced stems would be laid at right angles to each other, glued and pressed together to make a sheet. A roll was formed by gluing skins or papyrus sheets together. Skin was generally used by Jews for producing the Torah and other books, while papyrus was used by Greeks and Romans for book production.² In addition to these materials, wax tablets were used for notes. These were formed by tying a number of blocks together. Papyrus notebooks of a similar format were used for similar purposes. These were the traditional ways of making books. It is a striking contrast that very few copies of New Testament texts were written on a roll. Instead, they took the format of the tablet or notebook, and enlarged it into the papyrus codex, the book that we know today. Whether they invented the format is still not clear. But it is abundantly clear that they were the first to use it regularly.³

The codex came to the church early, and became a central part of its activity. The importance accorded it continues to be seen today. Whether in magnificent volumes or in cheap pocket copies, the books of the New Testament enjoyed a wide circulation. This breadth and variety is attested today in the way in which the surviving Greek manuscripts are catalogued. The vast majority are from the Byzantine period, produced between the tenth and sixteenth centuries. They were copied in a hand called minuscule, and they are listed by a simple number, such as 1 or 565. Most manuscripts of the first millennium are divided according to the material on which they were written. Papyrus copies are given a number prefixed by an upper-case 'P', as P45 or P66. This number is generally written as a superscript (P⁴⁵, P⁶⁶). Parchment manuscripts are classified in several ways. Because they have been recognized since the sixteenth century to be older and often more significant than minuscule copies, they have often been given names, reflecting their provenance (such as Codex Vaticanus) or some particular characteristic. When this became difficult to record succinctly when providing variant readings from them, upper-case letters were used, first of the Roman, then of the Greek and finally of the Hebrew alphabet (such as A, Π, or S). Then, numbers prefixed by a zero were adopted, such as 01, 0289. But the name and the letter are still often used for the first forty-five of them. Finally, there are lectionaries. These are manuscripts that contain the passages as prescribed in the lectionary, in the order in which they are to be read. They are indicated with a number preceded by an italic lower-case l, as l184.⁴

In reading the Gospels, and in considering their copying in early and medieval times, we should bear in mind the process of copying. The scribe had the task of preparing his materials. If he was writing on parchment, then he needed to cut it to the size he needed, and to complete the smoothing down of the surface for writing. He then needed to mark the margins and lines for writing. This was usually done with a dry point, after first marking the place for each line with a sharp point (pricking). Different writing centres had different customs, and it is often possible to ascribe a medieval manuscript to a particular area or even centre, on the basis of such details as whether the parchment leaves were laid out flat and all the leaves of a gathering pricked and ruled at once, or separately, and according to the placing of hair and flesh sides in a gathering. The two sides of a sheet of parchment are

slightly different in colour and character: the hair is darker and absorbs the ink more readily, while the paler flesh side is oilier and sometimes repels the ink. The two sides are obvious at a glance. It was the custom for the facing leaves of a codex to show the same side of the skin.

With papyrus, the scribe had again to cut the sheets to the size that he wanted, and to prepare the surface. But, as far as we can tell, the sheets were not ruled for the lines of writing. At any rate, no papyrus has yet been found on which any traces of pricking or ruling may be discerned. Either the scribe wrote without them, or they were provided by a means no longer visible.

The sheets ready, the scribe then prepared the pen, made in antiquity from a length of reed. This was held, not like a modern pen but between the first, second and third fingers, with the thumb free and the little finger supporting the hand. The cut of the pen and the angle at which it was held were two key factors in the scribe's producing a desired script. The ink also had to be prepared. For papyri, a vegetable ink was generally used. Parchment manuscripts, on the other hand, were generally written on with a metallic-based ink. This gives off an acid, which has seriously damaged some copies. A small number of *de luxe* manuscripts were produced, in which the parchment was dyed purple, and silver and even some gold ink was used. But this was exceptional. The illuminated manuscripts and fine miniatures that attract many people are the product of the medieval world. Any kind of extensive adornment was unusual in early Christianity. Perhaps a simple rope pattern at the end of a book was all that a scribe supplied, or maybe even that was lacking. Later there came more adornment. But most books were functional. Clarity of writing was paramount, and after that beauty of script.⁵

The scribe is now ready to begin. There were no desks, tables or chairs in antiquity. The scribe sat cross-legged, with the blank writing material on his knee, perhaps with a flat board under it, and with the manuscript to be copied beside him on the floor. In the Byzantine period, he will have had a kind of lectern. Dictation, in which one person read while a number produced copies, was certainly practised in the medieval monastic tradition. Its use in the early period is far less certain, and there is no incontrovertible evidence for it. It is more likely that individual scribes copied, looking at their copy, remembering the word or phrase, speaking it out loud to themselves as they wrote it down. And thus the wearisome process went on, until the book was done, the sheets could be bound into gatherings and the gatherings into a codex, and the finished article delivered to the customer. Before that could be done, it was desirable that the copy be checked. Some New Testament manuscripts were thus corrected; many were not. Even where they were, the modern reader will be puzzled to note how much imperfection the corrector allowed to stand. It may be asked how long it would take to copy the entire New Testament. There are variables here, and no categorical answer can be given. But one medieval Latin copy, the Stavelot Bible, contains a note telling us that the whole work, writing, illumination and binding, took two scribes 'the best part of four years'.

The question of dates brings us to the issue of dating manuscripts. Byzantine manuscripts were frequently dated. But the custom did not exist in antiquity; the oldest dated New Testament manuscript is a copy finished on 7 May 835. We depend for the earlier period almost wholly on palaeography, the comparative study of hands.

It is possible to place hands in a sequence of development, since formal literary hands were carefully taught and imitated, and developed in observable ways. One should consider any date as accurate within half a century, the approximate working life of an individual scribe.

The purpose for which books were produced must also be considered. Some were written by a scholar for private use. While these are harder to identify from antiquity, many examples are known from the Byzantine world. A sufficiently wealthy book-collector might send a slave to copy a particular text that he wished to acquire. But we should probably assume that the majority of copies of New Testament texts were produced for church use. The corollary of this is that for most people the texts were heard, not read. Ancient books had virtually no punctuation, and were written without spaces between words. The lector's task was not an easy one, and there is evidence that church copies would be taken home for preparation. In the course of time, various aids were added, especially from the third century on. These consisted of divisions into sections, into short chapters, and eventually the provision of lists of contents, and tables for finding parallel passages between Gospels. Before that, the barest of titles at the beginning and end of a book was all that the reader had. Even running titles and page numbers were a considerable rarity in Greek books in late antiquity.

The use of the New Testament texts in early Christianity has still to be fully explored. Besides the formal literary copies I have described are other, possibly more influential texts. A substantial number of papyri of John's Gospel contain a passage of text, perhaps a verse or more, and beneath a fortune-telling sentence. Copies of the Lord's Prayer or of other texts on tiny scraps of writing material, or even on shards of pottery (ostraka) perhaps served as spells to ward off evil spirits. Many such artefacts have been recovered in the course of excavations of Egyptian sites. They may have been the closest that many or even most people got to written Christian texts.

To return to the literary end of the spectrum: The ways in which a text came into circulation were quite different from the process of publication familiar today. A writer might circulate a few copies among his circle of friends. If they liked the work and talked about it, then other people might send one of their scribes to make them a copy, and so on. There were booksellers, but their shops did not contain rows of pristine volumes waiting to be sold. Production would have been on commission. Thus, we must reckon with quite a slow beginning to the circulation of most texts, including those of early Christianity. But we shall have to reckon with different circumstances for different books. This is because they circulated separately, not only initially, but for the most part down to the invention of printing. Only four complete Greek Bibles survive from antiquity (they are of the fourth and fifth centuries), and a further five from the tenth to the fifteenth. While the idea of a New Testament canon emerged in the course of events from the second century on, the idea of a single codex containing them does not seem to have become common until much later. We should consider the New Testament to have been to early Christianity a small library rather than a single volume.

The books circulated in small collections: the Gospels, Paul's Epistles, Acts and the Catholic Epistles and, in different associations or on its own, Revelation. We shall study them beginning with the first to be written.

PAUL'S LETTERS

The writings of Paul are the earliest collection of Christian books to have come down to us. Produced in the 40s and 50s, they consist of thirteen letters, nine of them to congregations, and four to individuals. While doubts have arisen as to the authenticity of some (Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus), and to the literary integrity of others (1 and 2 Corinthians), we still have a collection of at least seven of Paul's letters. They have in common that they were written in one place and sent to another. They were produced in response to specific events (Gal. 1.6), sometimes at least partly in reply to another letter (1 Cor. 7.1), or to reports (1 Cor. 1.11). They were dictated by Paul to an amanuensis (Rom. 16.22) sometimes with a final greeting in Paul's own hand (1 Cor. 16.21; Gal. 6.11). They were taken to their destination, and then read aloud in the congregation (1 Thess. 5.27). These individual letters would have been written on small rolls; Philemon perhaps on a single sheet.

The situation with regard to the recipients of Romans and Ephesians is somewhat uncertain. As to the latter, several of the most important manuscripts omit the words 'in Ephesus' in 1.1. It is conceivable that this is a circular letter (see also Col. 4.16). The circumstances surrounding the Epistle to the Romans are even more complicated. It circulated in antiquity in a fourteen-, fifteen- and sixteen-chapter form, with 16.25–7 standing at the end in each. That is to say, in some copies the letter ended at the end of [chapter 14](#), in others at the end of 15, and in others at the end of 16. In addition, a few copies omit the words 'in Rome' at 1.7. It has been suggested that the final chapter of personal greetings (strange to a church Paul had never visited – 1.10–11!) is a later addition, supplied to revise the letter for sending to the Ephesians. Whatever the truth of the matter, it is certain that this letter circulated in three different forms in the early church.⁶

What happened to these letters next? We only know that they were evidently kept safely, presumably by their recipients. The care with which this was done may have varied, for it is clear that Paul wrote at least one other letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5.9). The vital point for the later preservation of the letters is the one at which the separate letters were brought together into a single collection. Some theories propound a date around the year 100. Here the fact that some of the letters, notably the pastorals, are best explained as dating from the subapostolic age, must be borne in mind. For if the earliest collection was of all the Pauline letters in the New Testament, then a suitable lapse of time after his death in the mid-60s must be included in the reckoning. One may conjecture that copies were taken from those in the local archives, and these in turn copied into a single volume. Whether this was a roll or a codex, we simply do not know. The theory that this collection was the first codex has recently been advanced. Previously it had been argued and accepted that the first codex was a Gospel book. The matter remains under consideration.

Whatever the format, it is with this event that the copying process of the collected Pauline letters begins. It is this collected text that it is the primary goal of the critic to recover. The task of establishing the text that Paul originally sent will follow from this. The situation with regard to Romans is less simple. Whichever of the

three forms of the text was included in the collection, it may be that the problems are the result of the continuing influence of another form, perhaps one sent to a separate destination.

We know very little about the text of the collection in the second century, except for the fact that it was subjected to a revision by Marcion. Marcion held the view that the creating god of the Old Testament was not the god of the New, and that this fact had been obscured by a 're-Judaizing' of Christianity. He set out to rid the early Christian writings of these interpolations. He accepted ten Pauline epistles (apparently he did not know of the Pastorals). Ironically, given his status as a here-siarch, his prologues to these ten letters later became part of the standard ancillary material in the Vulgate Latin Bible.

It is with the transition from the second to the third century that our knowledge of the collection becomes secure. For it is from around the year 200 (perhaps a hundred years after the formation of the collection and fifty after Marcion) that the oldest extensive manuscript may be dated. Now in the Chester Beatty collection in Dublin since its discovery in Egyptian sands in the early 1930s, this remarkable survival is a papyrus codex. It contains portions (it has suffered considerable damage) of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians and Hebrews. We therefore learn at once that Hebrews, anonymous though it is, had by now been included in the collection. On the other hand, the codex did not contain the Pastorals. We know this by a simple computation. It is a single-quire codex, made by folding a pile of sheets in half. We can calculate the number of sheets missing at the beginning, and thus at the end also. The letters are in descending order of length, and the missing portion was not sufficient to contain the Pastorals.

The oldest complete copy of the letters is another century and a half younger. The accession of Constantine brought the church both peace and prosperity. With these came more money and more time for producing books. The lasting result was a transition from papyrus to parchment for the production of books. Thus the parchment codex became for over a thousand years the medium of Christian book production. The immediate result was a number of extensive collections of Christian texts (Septuagint, New Testament and other early writings) provided in three or four matching codices). Two of these survive from the fourth century (Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus), and two from the fifth (Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus). Vaticanus, preserved in the Vatican Library since at least the fifteenth century, is the product of the most careful tradition of copying. Alexandrinus is of similar quality. Ephraemi Rescriptus is a palimpsest, a manuscript whose parchment has been scraped clean and reused (making it very hard to read the older text).

One other Greek manuscript deserves mention as a key witness to the Pauline text. Produced in the middle of the tenth century in Byzantium, this manuscript is written in the minuscule hand that had by the previous century become the normal script for writing manuscripts. According to the custom for designating manuscripts in this script, it is given a simple number: in this case, 1739. Although so comparatively recent, it preserves ancient materials: according to various notes, it is a copy of a manuscript that itself had been copied from a manuscript compared with a copy



Figure 13.1 A page of one of the oldest Bibles of the Old and New Testaments, the monumental Codex Sinaiticus, showing John 1.1–38. The four-column format is unique. Among the many corrections, note at the bottom of Column 3 the alteration of Bethania to Bathabara in John 1.28. Add. Ms. 43725. Copyright British Library.

annotated by the early third-century scholar Origen, by Pamphilus, martyred in 309. It is important to note that the Chester Beatty papyrus and this manuscript often agree together. Such agreements against other witnesses are an important pointer to the text of the late second and early third century.

A few examples of textual variation in Paul's letters must suffice.⁷ General is the problem that in Hellenistic Greek the first- and second-person plural personal pronouns were pronounced identically. Since scribes wrote words speaking them out loud to themselves, there is considerable confusion in many places. Does Paul mean 'us' or 'you', does he include himself in the statement? A similar problem arises at Romans 6.1. Did Paul write, 'We have peace', or, 'Let us have peace'? The difference is between a long and a short 'o', pronounced identically in the Hellenistic period. The more familiar wording of Romans 8.28 is 'all things work together for good to them that love God'. More likely and more profound is the reading of Codex Vaticanus, now supported by P⁴⁶: 'For those who love God, God works everything for good.' At Hebrews 2.9 (Pauline to our early scribes, though not to us) the author

offered the startling and brilliant idea that Christ tasted death for all ‘without God’. The first hand of the minuscule manuscript 1739 is one of only two Greek manuscripts to read this. In addition, it is supported by one Latin manuscript, and by several important early Christian writers including Origen, Ambrose and Jerome. Where the citations of an early writer are clear enough for us to reconstruct the text of the book from which he was quoting, the testimony is important. We then know that such and such a text was in circulation at such a time and such a place. This information can be of vital importance in reconstructing the history of the text, the stages of copying through which a writing passed.⁸ The reading ‘without God’ is probably original. But the idea is likely to have fallen foul of later orthodoxy.⁹

THE GOSPELS

The four canonical Gospels appear to have come into existence in the last forty years of the first century. They constitute a vital stage in early Christianity’s memories of the sayings and acts of Jesus, for they represent the transition from oral to written text. However, we must offer several cautions. First, we do not know that they were the first or the only representatives of that transition. Second, the oral tradition did not come to an end when written records were produced. Third, the original form of the Gospels is lost to us. The oldest extensive surviving copy of any Gospel dates from more than a century after the first writing down of that Gospel. We must allow for the possibility that the texts which survive do not represent what the evangelists wrote, but have been to some unknown extent moulded by subsequent readers and copyists. Indeed, when one begins to study them in detail, one is staggered by the amount of variation between the manuscripts. It is an established fact that written texts of all kinds are most likely to suffer extensive alteration in the earliest stages of their lives. Thus, a high proportion of these variations in the Gospel text occurred before the year 200. Certainly, the creation of variation did not cease thereafter. But there is strong evidence that many of the most significant differences had indeed come into existence by then. In order to understand the problem, we must first describe the witnesses to the text. Remember, we do not have autographs, or authoritative copies. There are simply a large number of separate copies, each unique. The number of copies of the *Gospels* is far greater than that of any other part of the New Testament. It consists of papyri, majuscules, minuscules and lectionaries. The oldest of these (P⁵²) is a tiny scrap of John’s Gospel, written in the second quarter of the second century. It is very small, and the passage it covers contains, sadly, no significant reading. But three other papyri of particular value must be mentioned. One, copied in about 200, contains nearly all of John’s Gospel (P⁶⁶). Another of a similar date is also extensive, preserving most of Luke, and most of John down to [chapter 15](#) (P⁷⁵). This particularly significant manuscript shows all the signs, both in script and text, of being the result of careful and thoughtful production. The third (P⁴⁵) contains fragments of the four Gospels and Acts. It is somewhat later than the other two. It was found in the same place as the Chester Beatty manuscript of Paul’s letters, and is in the same collection today. Unfortunately, there are no papyri of Matthew or Mark as extensive as P⁶⁶ or P⁷⁵. For the value of these papyrus witnesses is that they are older than anything that had been known before they were

discovered in the course of excavations in Egypt. Until then, the oldest copies were those important fourth-century majuscules mentioned in the description of witnesses to the text of Paul. The papyri break the 'Constantinian barrier', and have made it possible for scholars to scrutinize the theories they had founded on the majuscules. The theory had been of a number of 'recensions', distinctive 'editions' of the text, established in the fourth and fifth centuries. The most valuable was the Alexandrian text, represented above all by Codex Vaticanus. Another was the Antiochian text from which the main 'Byzantine' text of the majority of later manuscripts was descended. A third came to be known as the 'Western' text. It puzzled everyone, for it seemed to depart most bafflingly and aberrantly from the other two, and yet sometimes it seemed to have a preferable text. Hitherto, there had been three ways of working out the text of the third century and before. The first was from the citations of early Christian writers. Here Origen, the great theologian and exegete of Alexandria and Caesarea, rules supreme. His extensive commentaries on Matthew and John often contain the material from which the Gospel text known to him may be reconstructed. The second was to examine and compare the earliest translations of the Gospels. These were the Syriac and Latin versions, both with their origins in the second century. Where these two agreed, one had cross-bearings on a now lost Greek text of the second century from which they were both derived. It was noticeable that they did often agree, and that in these agreements they were often joined by the Western text. This increased the puzzle over the Western text for those who favoured one of the other text types as more original. It encouraged some people to prefer it to the others. The third way was to compare the various forms of text in variant readings, and by observation, historical knowledge and common sense to work out which form must be the cause of the others.¹⁰

The discovery of P⁴⁵ in the 1930s, and of P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵ in the late 50s, made it possible to put these theories to the test. P⁷⁵ turned out, dramatically, to be either a precursor or an early member of the Alexandrian group. While not identical to Codex Vaticanus, it is so similar, and shows such similar thoroughness in its production, that the relationship is evidently close. But apart from this, there were no earlier representatives of the post-Constantinian text-types. There were manuscripts that offered promise of being Western, and then gave up being so. There were manuscripts that contained Byzantine readings, but then had a lot of non-Byzantine readings. With the exception of P⁷⁵, these papyri seemed to contain the pool of readings found in later manuscripts, but not to contain them in the distinctive blend that gave the later recensions their particular characteristics. There were a number of reasons for this change from second-century fluidity to fourth-century recensions. First, the success of the recensions was their promulgation by leading sees and figures, who saw the importance of agreed texts in cementing the unity of the Church; one might put this rather differently, and observe that control of the text was one way, along with the definition of orthodoxy and the prescription of the Canon, in which powerful figures strengthened their power. Until the fourth century there were no individuals or offices with the power successfully to do this. Second, such magnificent volumes as Codex Vaticanus or Codex Sinaiticus are the product of wealth and leisure. It is improbable that the Church of the Martyrs had sufficient of either. Indeed, it is perhaps unlikely that Christians of an earlier generation would have

approved. Jerome, writing early in the fifth century, wrote caustically of those who produced luxurious codices while Christ was starving at their door. Even more significant than these two reasons is a third: that early Christians were not so interested in preserving the texts verbatim as in preserving what they considered to be the proper significance and meaning of the Gospels. This concept of faithful copying is most noticeable in the transmission of the words of Jesus. It may be illustrated with a few examples:

In the earliest Gospel to have been written, that according to Mark, Jesus offers the following pronouncement about the end time: 'But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, except the Father' (13.32). Matthew (24.36) preserves this in his Gospel, with various small changes. But that Luke, the third of our evangelists to write, omitted the saying totally, may indicate that this denial of knowledge to Jesus soon became troublesome to Christians. Certainly, there is manuscript evidence from later times. A number of copies of Matthew, the oldest going back to the third century, omit the words 'nor the Son', as do several manuscripts of Mark.

At Luke 9.55 it is stated that Jesus rebuked the disciples' desire to bring down fire on the unwelcoming Samaritan village. This lack of information was considered unsatisfactory, and many manuscripts supply the words 'and he said, "You do not know of what manner of Spirit you are; for the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them."' These words appear to be a pastiche of Luke 19.10 and John 3.17, adapted to indicate what Jesus would have said on such an occasion. The [first part](#) of the saying was certainly in circulation in the second century, and the rest of it can be little more recent.

Finally, the reader is referred to the particularly striking example of Jesus' sayings on divorce and remarriage (Matt. 5.32; 19.9; Mark 10.11–12; Luke 16.18). There, in addition to marked differences between the English texts of each Gospel, there are further variants within each Gospel, so that more than a dozen different sayings are all put on to Jesus' lips.¹¹

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The textual history and problems of Luke's second volume are different again from anything hitherto described. It is generally formulated as the book's existing in two separate forms, one long and the other short. These two forms are also generally associated with two manuscripts. The long form is represented by Codex Bezae, which in the Gospels is the chief representative of the Western text, and the short form by Codex Vaticanus, in the Gospels the best representative of the Alexandrian text. The situation is in fact rather more complicated than this: it has been argued that Codex Bezae presents a rather degenerate version of the longer text, which is found more purely in other representatives; in addition, various witnesses contain some but not all of the features of the longer text. But, before exploring the questions more fully, an example of the differences must be provided.

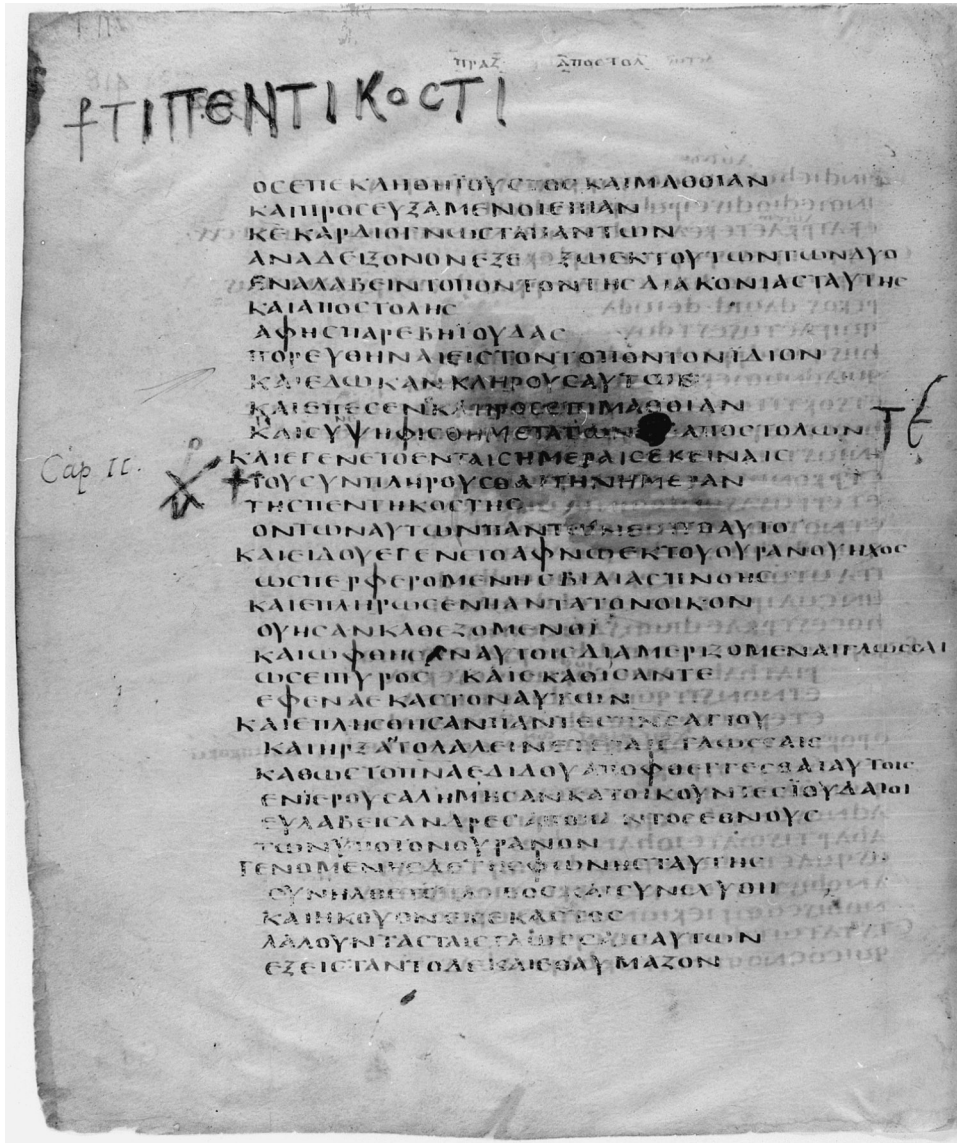


Figure 13.2 The opening of Codex Bezae (written in about 400). The Greek on the left and a Latin version on the right contains the variants at Acts 2.1 discussed in the text (in lines 12–19). The early Byzantine scrawl at the top records that it is the reading for Pentecost. ‘Cap. II’ in the margin is sixteenth or seventeenth century. By permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Figure 13.3 Codex Vaticanus, the manuscript most influential in the formation of the text used by English copies of the New Testament, showing Acts 2.1–2. The letters were reinked in the medieval period. Vatican, Gr. 1209 (Codex Vaticanus) Acts 2.1–2 (p.1383). Copyright Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

First, the shorter text (that on which the principal English versions are based), here translated out of Codex Vaticanus, of the passage Acts 2.1–2:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.
And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind,
and it filled the whole house where they were sitting



Figure 13.4 A manuscript of Acts and the Catholic epistles now in the library of New College, Oxford. It represents the Harklean Version, produced in 616 by Thomas of Harkel, a careful scholarly product. MS New Coll. C. 333 Fol. 141r. Copyright Bodleian Library, Oxford. By permission of the Warden and Fellows of New College, Oxford.

This is the same passage, as it is found in Codex Bezae:¹²

And it came to pass in those days when the day of Pentecost had come, when they were all of them in one place, and behold suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a wind of might, and it filled all of the house where they were sitting.

As in the Gospels, we find that other important witnesses to the text of Codex Bezae are found in various languages. In Syriac there is the Harklean Version, a very careful and unidiomatic translation of the Greek, produced in 616, and with useful marginal notes on certain important readings. In Latin we have several important manuscripts. In Coptic there is a manuscript written in a little-attested Middle Egyptian dialect in the fourth century, which is complete as far as the beginning of [chapter 15](#). There are also some other interesting Greek witnesses, including a copy containing also a Latin translation, written probably in Sardinia in the sixth century. Called Codex Laudianus as a result of its ownership by Archbishop Laud, and now in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, it is probably the actual manuscript the Venerable Bede used when he was writing his commentary on Acts.

There have been three main explanations for the existence of the two versions of the text: that the longer one is authentic, that the shorter is authentic, and that both are the work of Luke's hand. There has always been least support for the first point of view. It seems strange that copyists or readers should excise interesting and improving stories about the apostles, while it is readily understandable why they should expand such material. Almost the only strong point in favour of the theory is the fact that there seem to be places where the shorter text is rather clumsy where there is an expansion in the longer text, as though it had been crudely reduced.

The case for two Lukan versions has been advanced several times, most recently in an account that takes seriously the nature of an edition in the ancient world.¹³ As we have seen, this consisted of a limited private circulation, followed by wider dissemination. It has been suggested that Luke wrote a version known to us as the shorter text, which was read in his circle. As a consequence of readers' reactions, Luke made marginal and interlinear additions and corrections. After a period of neglect in the second century, an unknown editor produced the longer version from Luke's corrected copy, sometimes confusing corrections for additions. The study of the two versions is, therefore, a study not in the textual history of the book, but in Luke's creative activity. This theory is interesting and not implausible. The traditional argument against it is that the two versions are sometimes contradictory, and therefore cannot both be Lukan. This seems weak – if one believes the accounts to be based on sources, then the author might have found what he considered to be superior evidence; if, on the other hand, one considers Luke's literary creativity to have played a large role in his composition, then one might suppose that he had thought of a better way of telling the story. A more telling problem, and one to which the present writer has devoted some study, is that the longer text itself appears to have undergone a process of growth. Broadly speaking, the earlier forms of the longer text of which we know appear to have been shorter than the later forms. For example, the story of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch has passed through several

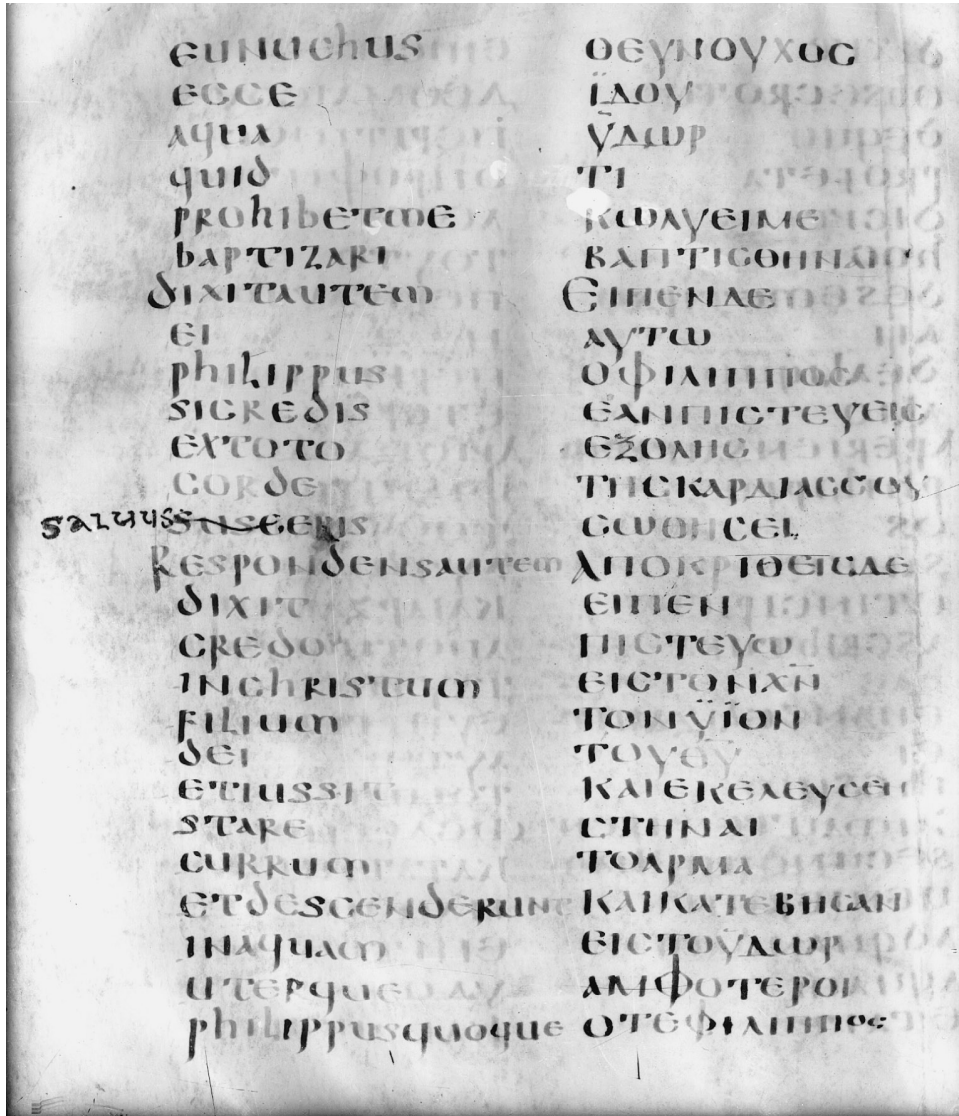


Figure 13.5 This manuscript once in the possession of Archbishop Laud, now in the Bodleian Library Oxford, has a Greek version, with a Latin translation on its right hand on each page. It shows Acts 8.37, when the manuscript supports the longer reading. MS Laud Gr. 35 fol. 70. Copyright Bodleian Library Oxford.

stages of development. Verse 37 is missing in the short version. As it is found in the main Greek witness to the longer version, it reads:

Philip said to him, 'If you believe with all your heart he [sic] will be saved.'
Answering he said, 'I believe in the Christ the Son of God.'

Other witnesses to the longer version present the eunuch's reply as 'I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God'.

The short version of verse 39 reads:

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away . . .

The text of Codex Alexandrinus (not generally a witness to the longer text) and of some witnesses to the longer text runs:

When they came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit fell upon the eunuch,
and the angel of the Lord snatched Philip away . . .

This addition, along with the variation in verse 37, illustrates how readily such accounts were developed by early Christian readers and copyists, and indeed this example clearly illustrates the reasons for such development.

Another recent approach to the two texts has been less concerned with the question of originality, and instead has focused on the internal logic and ideas of the longer text. The contribution of 'Discourse Analysis' has played a key role here. Changes in word order or tense, the selection of one conjunction rather than another, may have played an important role in the way in which ancient readers understood the text. These apparently small changes in the longer text may be cumulatively significant in casting light on its development.¹⁴ Additionally, it may be that certain theological and cultural presuppositions shed light on the growth of the longer text. In particular, it has been argued that some changes show the increasing anti-Jewish feeling of the third, fourth and fifth centuries, projected back into Luke's picture of the emergent church.¹⁵

A final example to illustrate the two texts of Acts may be taken from [chapter 15](#) and the Apostolic Decree (verse 29). It is found in the shorter text of Codex Vaticanus as follows: 'that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity'. The longer text of Codex Bezae runs, 'that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from unchastity; and whatever you do not wish to happen to yourselves, do not do to another'. The reading differs in the excision of the reference to 'what is strangled', a compromise in the keeping of Torah that was no longer relevant at a later date, and in the universalization of the specific commands in the negative formulation of the Golden Rule.

The picture, therefore, that emerges is of a text of Luke preserved most accurately, though by no means without blemish, by the witnesses of the short text form, particularly Codex Vaticanus. Alongside this there developed a text form that handled

Luke's text quite freely, considering it acceptable to expand or to rewrite sections in order to highlight certain points of doctrine or practice that could then be more clearly seen to have been done in such and such a way by the earliest church. Although the long text has little claim to be original, it deserves careful study, for it is a prime witness to the way in which early Christianity used and interpreted Acts.

THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

The Catholic Epistles were generally, and from early times, contained in a single codex with Acts. But they have none of its textual complexities. There are, of course, many variations, some of great significance, and a number of them extremely difficult to elucidate. The text is currently being comprehensively edited in the first volume of the major critical edition being prepared by the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster, Westphalia.¹⁶ Although they were transmitted together their origins are quite separate, and it is some ways misleading to discuss them together. Jude and 2 Peter seem, however, to have a close relationship, and it has generally been agreed that part of the latter is derivative of the former. It appears that a small amount of harmonization between the two at a later stage of copying has made confusion worst confounded in sorting out this problem.

Several early papyri of this collection have been recovered, including P⁷², a manuscript found with P⁷⁵ of Luke and John, and like it of a high quality.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

This, the book least copied throughout the manuscript period of Christianity, has again a quite different textual history. Before it is explained, a little pure textual theory will help. The editor of classical texts in Greek or Latin will be used to dealing with a handful of manuscripts, perhaps all of them derived from one early medieval copy. Such an editor will study the variations between these witnesses, for the purpose of constructing a family tree or stemma, showing how they relate to one another. When that has been done, a large number of the variations within each witness may be shown to be secondary, the result of error or confusion within the copying. The process of restoring the original text is made easier by eliminating so many differences between the manuscripts.¹⁷ This process has never been possible for the New Testament. Not only are there too many copies; the task is made impossible by the ever-shifting alliances between manuscripts. Technically, the manuscripts are contaminated: they are not, to continue the genealogical analogy, pure descendants of those lost copies that we seek to reconstruct, but represent frequent intermarryings between different groups. The cause of the problem is simply that the New Testament books were copied too often.

All, that is, except for Revelation. There are under three hundred manuscript copies. Here, while it is not possible to create a stemma, one can divide all the manuscripts into families. There were two families, each of them containing two groups. The number of papyri of this book is small, and indeed the oldest copy to contain more than a fraction of the text is Codex Sinaiticus, which has it complete. Although some complicated theories of the stages by which this book came into

being have been proposed, the manuscripts show no such extensive differences between one another. But a number of interesting problems arise. These include the number of the Beast at 13.18, given in some manuscripts as 666, and in others as 616. Greek numerals are given by the allocation of letters of the alphabet to the successive units, tens and hundreds, so that the difference is of a single letter. Various explanations for each number have been given, all depending upon the numerical value of various names of Roman emperors and wordings referring to the Roman state, and it seems likely (space prevents a proper discussion) that the number was deliberately changed in order to make the text relevant to a new crisis in the life of the Church. A variant that illustrates the problems of the lack of punctuation and of word division is found in the well-known verse 14.13. A translation without punctuation might run, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth blessed indeed says the Spirit that they may rest from their labours for their deeds follow them.' 'Henceforth' may go with either the first or the second half of the sentence. A similar problem arises at the end of [chapter 12](#). Should we read 'I stood', connecting the sentence with [chapter 13](#), or 'It stood', finishing off [chapter 12](#)? The difference is one letter in the Greek.

It will be observed that the variation in this book is slight, and this should not be ascribed only to the relative infrequency of its copying, and to its less regular use (to this day it has never been part of the Orthodox lectionary cycle); but also to the nature of the text. The greatest variation in the New Testament texts exists in the Gospels, and particularly in those parts where one might expect there to be least: that is, the sayings of Jesus. An interesting situation emerges: from the number of copies, and its enthusiasm for producing them, early Christianity might appear to be very much a people of a book. But the degree to which they changed the text of those copies shows them to have felt not at all constrained to treat them with any particular reverence or caution. The curse pronounced at the end of Revelation upon those who added to or took away from 'the words of this book' may or may not have deterred readers and copyists. It was certainly not a general early Christian attitude to their texts. Along with the written text went a powerful belief in the continuing inspiration of the Church by God's Spirit, and a conviction that the meaning was being made plain in their midst. This showed itself in theological controversy of high import, particularly with regard to Christological and Trinitarian matters, by a willingness to tweak the text in the direction of what a particular reader or copyist considered to be the truth. It is likely that the original words of the heavenly voice at Jesus' baptism according to Luke (3.22) were 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.' This may have seemed rather adoptionist at a later point, and were replaced by words taken from Matthew and Mark: 'You are my beloved Son, in you I am well-pleased.'¹⁸ It was, as shown already, only from the fourth century, and initially even then only gradually, that the text began to be treated as fixed. Even so, there was never an overwhelming determination to remove all aberrant forms of text. This may be illustrated by examples of quite late manuscripts, tenth-century or later, that reproduce very early (even second- or third-century) types of text or groups of readings.

The study of the many manuscripts of the New Testament, in the early versions as well as in Greek, besides being in itself a fascinating pursuit, is of value not only in

the quest for the earliest and original texts. It also casts light on the theological and social development both of Christianity and of the many cultures in which it grew.

NOTES

- 1 M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford, 1924; revised edn ed. J. K. Elliott, Oxford, 1993.
- 2 For ancient books see B. M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- 3 Although their solution did not win universal agreement, so that it has been modified, see C. H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex*, London: The British Academy, 1983.
- 4 The complete catalogue of all Greek New Testament manuscripts is K. Aland, *Kurzgefasste Liste der Griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments* (ANTF 1), 2nd edn, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994. For descriptions of the principal manuscripts, see K. and B. Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* 2nd edn, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989) and B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd edn, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. For an account of each of the four groupings of manuscripts, see Part I of B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes, *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis. A Volume in Honor of Bruce M. Metzger* (SD 46), Grand Rapids, 1995.
- 5 For the role and use of books see Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- 6 Harry Y. Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans* (SD 42), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977.
- 7 For important discussions of many other important readings in Paul, see G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum*, The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1946, London: The British Academy, 1953.
- 8 See [Part Three](#) of Ehrman and Holmes, *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*.
- 9 For this and other theologically motivated alterations to the text, see B. D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- 10 D. C. Parker, 'The Development of Textual Criticism since B. H. Streeter', *NTS* 24 (1977), 149–62.
- 11 See, for this last example, and for the issues discussed in general, D. C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- 12 The two Greek texts are given on facing pages in J. H. Ropes, *The Text of Acts*, Vol. 3: *The Beginnings of Christianity. Part 1: The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake, London, 1926. They give a history of the text, ccxc–ccxcvii. An English translation of Codex Bezae was made by J. H. Wilson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, London: SPCK, 1924.
- 13 W. Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts* (SNTSMS 71), Cambridge, 1992.
- 14 See e.g. J. Heimerdinger, 'The Seven Steps of Codex Bezae: A Prophetic Interpretation of Acts 12', in D. C. Parker and C.-B. Amphoux (eds), *Codex Bezae: Studies from the Lunel Colloquium June 1994* (New Testament Tools and Studies 22), Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996.
- 15 The most important such study is E. J. Epp, *The Theological Tendencies of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (SNTSMS 3), Cambridge, 1966, 1–40, 165–71.
- 16 *Novum Testamentum Graecum Editio Critica Maior* IV Catholic Letters, Instalment 1 James, [Part 1](#) Text and [Part 2](#) Supplementary Material, ed. B. Aland, K. Aland, Gerd Mink and Klaus Wachtel, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997; Instalment 2 The letters of Peter, 2000.
- 17 The process is succinctly described by P. Maas, *Textual Criticism*, tr. B. Flowers, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958. The wittiest as well as one of the profoundest discussions is A. E. Housman's 'The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism', *Proceedings of the Classical Association* 18 (1922), 67–84; reprinted in *The Classical Papers of A.E. Housman*, ed. J. Diggle and F. R. D. Goodyear, Vol. 3, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, 1058–69.
- 18 See Ehrman's *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*.

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ADDENDUM

The reader's attention is drawn to an important recent study, which argues that the Greek New Testament was first produced as an edition, as part of a Christian edition of the entire Greek Bible made in the middle of the second century. This theory, which deserves to be taken very seriously, is at variance with some of what is argued above. In another work, the same author has argued that Paul himself produced

a collected edition of four of his letters (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians), with Romans 16 as a cover note.

Trobisch, D., *The First Edition of the New Testament*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
—— *Paul's Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins*, Bolivar, Missouri: Quiet Waters Publications, 2001.

The reader's attention is also drawn to a study of early Christian scribes and their role:

Haines-Eitzen, Kim, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmission of Early Christian Literature*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS



George J. Brooke

BASIC DESCRIPTION

The term Dead Sea Scrolls refers to manuscript finds from several sites in the wilderness of Judaea mostly from the middle of the twentieth century. Although the discoveries at Masada and other locations have been very significant, the term Dead Sea Scrolls is most commonly associated with the manuscript finds from the eleven caves at or near Khirbet Qumran on the north-west shore of the Dead Sea. Between 1947 and 1956 eleven caves were discovered there either by local Bedouin or by archaeologists. Fragments of over 850 manuscripts have come to light.

Samples from the collection have been subject to accelerator mass spectrometer dating and for the most part it is clear that the manuscripts were produced during the last three centuries before the fall of the Second Temple in 70 CE. The pottery found in the caves with the fragmentary manuscripts contained some distinctive types that were also found on the site at Qumran where coin evidence in particular suggested more or less continuous occupation from about 100–75 BCE to 68 CE.

THE QUMRAN SITE

The site Qumran takes its name from the Arabic term given to the place that since the middle of the nineteenth century has been anglicized as Qumran. Some scholars have wondered whether behind the Arabic name there lies a biblical place name such as Gomorrah. Some confidence has been expressed in the view that the site is to be associated with biblical Secacah (Joshua 15.61), which name also occurs in the *Copper Scroll* four times.

There were five seasons of excavations at Qumran (1951, 1953–6) led by Père Roland de Vaux of the Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem. It soon became apparent that the caves and the site were linked in some way, since distinctive pottery types found in the caves were also to be found at the site. Though this link has sometimes been challenged, such challenges have not been successful, not least because several of the caves where manuscripts were found are very near to the site. The vast majority of scholars are thus happy to associate the scroll deposits in the caves with the principal period of occupation of the site itself.

Although the complete reports from the Qumran excavations have yet to be published, de Vaux presented his interpretation of the history of the site on several occasions. As a result the site is usually described in terms of the periods of its occupation, rather than stratigraphically. For the two centuries before the fall of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, de Vaux divided the occupation of the site into two periods. Although he subsequently pushed the initial date of occupation back to the middle of the second century BCE, his first impression which is now strongly advocated by scrolls scholars and archaeologists alike was that the initial period of occupation began (Period Ia) at some point near the end of the second or the beginning of the first century BCE. A small rectangular courtyard, first constructed in the seventh or sixth century BCE was reoccupied and a round cistern reused. This small building was almost immediately expanded (Period Ib) into a complex of both large and small rooms with small industrial installations, such as those for making pottery. The water system was expanded and the cisterns from this period (and Period II) are of two types, those with limited steps or none at all, which were probably used for water storage, and those with divided steps across the whole of one end, which may well have served for bathing or ritual washing. For de Vaux the site was abandoned in 31 BCE when it was hit by a large earthquake and, on the basis of his interpretation of the coin evidence, not reoccupied until sometime shortly after the death of Herod the Great in 4 BCE. Recent reconsideration of the coin evidence from the Herodian period has resulted in the proposal that the period of abandonment was much shorter than de Vaux proposed and might not have been caused by the earthquake of 31 BCE. Nearly all are agreed, however, that the site was attacked by the Romans in 68 CE as they made their way up to besiege Jerusalem which fell in 70 CE. Thereafter there were intermittent periods of occupation, first probably by a small Roman garrison and then, later, probably by some Jewish rebels, at the period of the Bar Kokba revolt (132–35 CE).

The function of the Qumran site has been much debated. Arguments depend principally on three factors. Firstly, consideration must be given to various features of the site itself. Its proximity to several of the caves where manuscripts were found is a strong argument in favour of linking the caves and their contents with the site, and the presence of inkwells on the site suggests that at least some writing was done at Qumran. Furthermore, several characteristics of the site suggest that it was occupied by a group who worked, ate and deliberated together. Over 1,000 bowls and plates were found stored adjacent to a large communal room whose sloping floor onto which water could be diverted from a conduit strongly suggests that it was a common dining area that could be easily and thoroughly cleaned. In several locations throughout the site, but not in any rooms, deposits of animal bones were found buried in jars. No adequate explanation for these deposits has been made; it is unlikely that the bones were the remains of sacrifices, but they could have come from some special community celebrations. The cisterns which are more obviously for bathing purposes (*mikvaot*) suggest that the Jewish community who lived there was concerned with ritual purity.

Now that de Vaux's identification of one locus as a toilet has been rediscovered, some might argue that its presence goes against identifying the occupants of the site as the Essenes, since the evidence of Josephus (*War* 2.148–49) would suggest

that they only went to the toilet at a distance from the site. Several other features have commonly been used to argue against the identification of the occupants as sectarian in general or as Essene in particular, but none of these features can be viewed as incontrovertibly challenging such an identification. The supposed poverty of the Essenes is thought to be compromised by the large number of coins found at the site, especially the three hoards of silver Tyrian shekels. The substantial pillar bases and significant quantities of expensive stoneware and glass are also just as capable of being understood as the result of communal wealth based on individual vows of poverty as they may be suggestive of the individual wealth of the occupants of the site. In fact, the simplicity of the pottery types, the absence of imported fine wares, the lack of any elaborate architectural decoration on the site such as is found at Masada or Herodian Jericho, all strongly suggest that the site was the scene of a Jewish community whose priorities lay elsewhere than in generating wealth.

Secondly, the site needs to be placed into its wider context for comparative purposes; in several respects it is unlike nearby contemporary sites, but in some respects it shares certain features with them. Those who liken Qumran to a fortress underestimate the weakness of its defences in comparison with other Hasmonean and Herodian fortress sites. Those who argue that it should be likened to a fortified farmhouse or villa fail to appreciate the elaborate complexity of the Qumran site, even though its basic rectangular design corresponds with what is known of such contemporary fortified farmsteads. Nevertheless, consideration of the archaeological context makes it clear that the cylindrical jars and peculiar oil lamps found at Qumran are not unique to the site, though as elsewhere, notably at Jericho, these seem to be datable to the Herodian period or later. Claims have been made too about the distinctiveness of the Qumran cemetery and the religious significance of the burials there, but similar shaft burials have been discovered at Ein el-Ghuweir, in Jerusalem and on the eastern shores of the Dead Sea.

Thirdly, there is written evidence of two kinds. The description of the site by Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 5.73) has been much disputed. Although he never actually visited the Judaean wilderness, Pliny describes the Essenes as residing to the west of the Dead Sea and mentions that 'below them (*infra hos*)' is found Engedi. Even if this is taken literally to mean that the small set of first century CE dwellings on the plateau above Engedi is to be identified as an Essene settlement, the identification of Qumran as also such a settlement is not thereby automatically excluded. Most scholars, however, prefer to understand Pliny's phrase to mean that Engedi was 'to the south of' or 'down river from' the settlement he describes, which could thus readily be identified with Qumran.

The second kind of literary evidence comes from the Qumran site itself. In 1996 two Hebrew ostraca were found in the wall that runs along the terrace to the south of the main group of buildings. Though it is unlikely that the technical term for the community (*yahad*) is to be read on the better preserved of these ostraca, as has been claimed, the text is clearly a deed of gift concerning a slave and agricultural property. If the named beneficiary was the community bursar, then the ostrakon strikingly illustrates the practice of the community in having property assigned to the group and formally registered, and so may justifiably be used to confirm the communal activities referred to elsewhere in the sectarian scrolls found at Qumran (1QS 6.18–20).

THE CAVES

General descriptions of the Dead Sea Scrolls (such as this) often tend to treat the manuscript collection of the eleven caves as a unity and to assume that all the caves served the same function for hiding the manuscripts at some particular catastrophic moment, such as the arrival of the Romans in the region in 68 CE. However, a more careful consideration of each cave suggests that some of them served distinct functions.

Caves 1, 3 and 11 are found in the cliff face above Qumran; they are all naturally formed. In cave 1 all the scrolls had been carefully stored in sealed jars as if in a genizah. Indeed it is quite likely that the manuscripts from cave 1 were already slightly damaged when placed there, and so were no longer in use. On the other hand, the caves in the marl terrace on which the Qumran site is located and on the one adjacent to it were formed by hand; because of their proximity to the site of Qumran these caves seem to have served a variety of functions. Not many manuscript fragments were found in cave 8, but there was a considerable number of leather tabs and ties; perhaps that cave was used as a small workshop for finishing off manuscripts. Cave 4 produced by far the largest number of fragments, belonging to over 550 manuscripts, including several copies of some compositions; it seems as if that cave was some kind of working repository for the site, not unlike a limited-access library stack. Perhaps some of its contents were regularly consulted as exemplars from which other manuscript copies could be made, but other items, such as the tefillin and mezuzot, seem to have been deposited merely for safe-keeping. The cave was certainly prepared well before any Roman advance and, as the holes in the wall suggest, it had an elaborate shelving system, none of which has survived. Cave 7, which can only be reached by walking through the Qumran site itself, was found to have manuscript fragments written only in Greek; though some Greek fragments were also found in cave 4, it seems as if cave 7 may have been a depository with special significance.

THE MANUSCRIPT FINDS

Background information

The manuscripts from Qumran are referred to in two ways: either by cave number, the letter Q (for Qumran), and the manuscript number or by cave number, the letter Q and an abbreviated title. Thus the principal *Commentary on Genesis* from the fourth cave is designated either as 4Q252 or as 4QCommGen A. In this case the capital A signifies that other works labelled as *Commentaries on Genesis* are probably not copies of the same composition; different manuscripts containing the same composition are designated with a small raised letter, indicating the copy number (e.g. 4QIsa^a is the first copy of Isaiah from Qumran's cave 4). Lists of all the manuscripts from Qumran can be found in several different reference works. References to any particular item in many of the more fragmentary manuscripts are given by fragment number, column number (usually in small Roman numerals), and line number; in the better preserved manuscripts often column (commonly in standard numerals) and line number suffice.

The Qumran manuscript collection has both unity and diversity. It is best to be clear about its material diversity to begin with. Writing has been found predominantly on leather (parchment) fragments and scrolls, but there are several papyrus manuscripts too and also inscriptions on pieces of pottery (ostraca) and jars. There is also the famous *Copper Scroll*, which was made of three pieces of thinly beaten copper on which letters were impressed with some kind of engraving tool.

The majority of the scrolls are written in Hebrew, mostly in various forms of square script, but some of the Pentateuchal books and Job are represented in paleo-Hebrew, and the paleo-Hebrew alphabet is also used for the four letters of the divine name (the tetragrammaton) and for other divine epithets in some biblical and non-biblical scrolls. In addition to the biblical scrolls and some other compositions, it can safely be said that all the obviously sectarian compositions are extant only in Hebrew, as if the sect responsible for them was trying to make a point that identified them as continuous with the Israel of an earlier age. 4Q464 3 i 8, probably a sectarian composition, seems to describe Hebrew as 'the holy tongue'.

The Hebrew found in all these compositions is very diverse. Not only may changes and developments in the language over 300 years or more be represented in the scrolls, but also there are different idiolects: some compositions are in a deliberately archaizing style of Hebrew that tries to imitate the biblical books in various ways, whereas others use forms and vocabulary that may have been closer to the spoken forms of Hebrew, both cultic and non-cultic, of late Second-Temple period Palestine. An example of this is *Miqṣat Ma'āse Ha-Torah* (MMT), 'some of the precepts of the Torah', which is a second century BCE open letter recommending adherence to particular legal interpretations.

The Aramaic of Qumran is also diverse and there has been a considerable debate about how much of what is found in the Aramaic scrolls reflects the spoken language of much of the population of Palestine at the time. The extent to which one can use the scrolls for the reconstruction of the everyday language of Hillel, Jesus and others is thus controversial. A few scrolls are in Greek. At Qumran all these are literary texts, not business documents, apart from 4Q350. Though several ingenious suggestions have been made, as yet unexplained are several combinations of Greek letters that occur at the end of some of the units of text in the *Copper Scroll*.

The scrolls provide us with an unparalleled amount of information concerning the preparation and production of manuscripts in the late Second-Temple period. The scrolls that are assembled from pieces of animal skin are of various sizes and are prepared in a variety of ways. Many are ruled by gentle incision both horizontally for writing under, and vertically to demarcate margins. Such ruling is based on the use of guide dots in the margins. On some sheets of parchment the column width is regular, but on others there are commonly wider margins for the right-hand columns on the sheet than for those on the left. Some scrolls are prepared so as to contain large amounts of text, such as 1QIsa^a, which contains the whole of the book of Isaiah in 54 columns (7.34 m), and the principal copy of the *Temple Scroll* (1Q19; reconstructed length is c. 8.75 m), of which parts of sixty-six columns are extant. At least one 'scroll' is simply a single piece of leather with just one column of writing (4Q175).

The scrolls attest to a wide range of scribal practices. With regard to the layout of the text, it is evident that compositions were presented in paragraphs marked by

spacing on the line, by the scribe starting a new line, or by the use of a new line and indentation. Occasionally a whole line is left blank. Major units of text are often indicated by the use of marginal markings of various shapes. As the composition was written out, mistakes were corrected in a number of ways: by erasure, by crossing out, or by cancellation dots above and beneath the incorrect letters. Omissions are sometimes made good, either by the same scribe or by a subsequent corrector; omitted text is supplied between lines or even in the margins. The texts themselves are presented in a variety of different scribal spelling practices. These practices are commonly ascribed to one of two groups, though in practice few manuscripts belong consistently within one particular scribal system. One group reflects a generally brief system of spelling which uses few consonants to represent vowel sounds, as is found in much of the Masoretic textual tradition of the Hebrew Bible. The other group reflects a fuller spelling system, even for some biblical books. Since a majority of the sectarian compositions survive in the fuller spelling, it may justifiably be supposed that the non-sectarian biblical and non-biblical works that are written in a similar spelling practice were copied by members of the community, whereas others may have been brought into the community from outside.

The library

It is probably correct to talk of the collection of manuscripts from all eleven caves as forming a library. Although the scrolls are written in two basic scribal systems and several variations of them, and although the collection contains both sectarian and non-sectarian materials, several factors point to the overall cohesion of the manuscripts. Even though some of the caves may have had manuscripts put in them at different times, it is remarkable that the largest surviving manuscript deposits, from cave 1 in the foothills above Qumran, from cave 4 within a stone's throw of the Qumran buildings, and from cave 11, which is furthest from Qumran, share certain features. In addition to various biblical books, the *Rule of the Community* is best known from its cave 1 copy, but up to ten versions of it have also been found in cave 4 (4Q255–64) and it is also suggested that it may have been part of the cave 11 deposit (11Q29); a copy was probably also deposited in cave 5 (5Q11). Other compositions that occur in more than one cave include the book of *Jubilees* found in cave 1 (1Q17–18), in cave 4 (4Q176a, 4Q216–24, 4Q482–3), and in cave 11 (11Q12) as well as in caves 2 (2Q19–20) and 3 (3Q5). The *Temple Scroll* may have been found in cave 4 (4Q365a?; 4Q524), though the principal copies come from cave 11 (11Q19–21). The Aramaic *New Jerusalem* text was found in cave 1 (1Q32), in cave 4 (4Q232 [in Hebrew], 4Q554–5) and in cave 11 (11Q18), as well as in caves 2 (2Q24) and 5 (5Q15).

The manuscript deposits also share certain other features. All of them are principally concerned with literary compositions; there are virtually no business documents to be found in the whole collection. Among the calendar, prayer and festival texts none completely contravenes the 364-day solar calendar explicitly attested in several places and that lies behind such compositions as the *Temple Scroll*. Furthermore, certain contemporary Jewish compositions are lacking, such as 1 and 2 Maccabees, the book of Judith, and the book of Esther, all of which must have been in circulation at

the time the site was occupied and the caves used. The religious or political sentiments expressed in those works seem not to have been welcome at Qumran. In addition, no non-Jewish literature has been discovered in the caves; one might have expected there to be some, if the deposits in the caves were from the great libraries of Jerusalem.

There is a rich range of literary materials in this Qumran library and several different ways of classifying them, but here I suggest that the compositions can be grouped under five headings. The first four are arranged here so as to make the important point that the movement and community responsible for collecting and transmitting these texts is seen clearly to be aligning itself with biblical Israel. Although some of the sectarian compositions allude to scripture only implicitly, the vast majority of literary works found in the caves can be seen either as biblical or as heavily dependent on biblical traditions. The community thought of itself as the only true remnant of Israel in the eschatological period; in its own self-understanding it was not post-biblical but on the verge of inheriting all that was promised to them as penitent exiles.

1. In the first place many of the compositions are copies of biblical books. Care must be exercised in assessing the manuscripts that can be assigned to this category. In strict terms the label 'biblical' is an anachronism for the last three centuries before the fall of the Temple in 70 CE; it also suggests misleadingly that the manuscript remains are in the form of books. Nevertheless approximately 200 of the 850 manuscripts from the Qumran caves can be broadly defined as biblical. It is often stated that there are copies of all the compositions later found in the three parts of the Hebrew scriptures (Law, Prophets and Writings) except Esther, but it should also be noted that there is only the smallest fragmentary evidence for the books of Ezra–Nehemiah (4Q117) and Chronicles (4Q118).

From the several references to what God commanded 'by the hand of Moses and by the hand of all his servants the Prophets' (e.g. 1QS 1.3), it is clear that the Law and the Prophets were understood as authoritative, though whether the Prophets included also the historical books remains uncertain. In 4Q397 14–21 10–11, a first century BCE manuscript, we read of 'the Book of Moses {and} the books of {the Pr}ophets and in Davi[d]', and the text seems to continue with reference to the deeds of former generations; perhaps this is a reference to a four-part authoritative collection of scriptures: 'Moses' designating the five books of the Law, 'the Prophets' describing the writings of the three major and twelve minor literary prophets (and possibly Daniel; cf. 4Q174 1 ii 3), 'David' referring to the Psalms or perhaps even to the collection of writings of which the Psalms are usually put in first place, and 'former generations' possibly referring to the history books. With such a notice can be compared the definitions in the Greek Prologue to Ben Sira (c. 132 BCE), in Luke 24.44 and elsewhere. If citation is also used as a criterion for helping us determine what was authoritative at Qumran, then the book of *Jubilees* should also be included (CD 16.3–4; 4Q228) as also some Levi composition (CD 4.15). Since the New Testament's letter of Jude 14–15 refers to the writings of *Enoch* in an authoritative way, perhaps the considerable number of *Enoch* manuscripts found in the Qumran caves indicates that they were held in esteem there too.

Within the authoritative collection it seems as if the biblical books given a particular place of honour included Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, most of the Twelve

Minor Prophets, and the Psalms, which circulated in at least two different groupings. Both the number of manuscript copies to survive and also the frequent citation of and allusion to these works suggest that these books formed a sort of 'canon within the canon' for their collectors. Perhaps it is particularly in these books that there is an indication of the theological concerns of the community. Interest in Genesis would have provided ancient patriarchal authority for the community's practices, Deuteronomy's law for the land (Deuteronomy 12–26) could have been used to justify in many ways the strict and exclusivist interpretation of the Law found in the rest of the sectarian compositions, Isaiah and the Twelve were the sources of many of the eschatological views of the community and the movement of which it was a part, and the Psalms, variously collected, were viewed both as prophecy (cf. 11QPs^a 27.11) and as a live part of worship.

If the Qumran biblical scrolls give a strong indication of which scriptural books were considered authoritative by the sect and probably also the wider Jewish community, they also show that the two centuries before the fall of the Temple in 70 saw a gradual move towards a standard form of the text of each book. Four principal theories have been put forward to categorize and explain the textual pluralism of the Qumran biblical manuscripts. F. M. Cross is most commonly associated with the theory of local texts, in which the evidence is variously associated schematically with Jewish scribal schools in Babylon, Egypt and Palestine. S. Talmon has offered an alternative view, arguing that the pluralism now evident is simply the result of which Jewish communities survived; the variety was probably even greater than is now discernible. E. Tov has argued that although a few biblical manuscripts at Qumran can be linked with the increasingly authoritative proto-Masoretic text, with the Hebrew Vorlage of the LXX, and with the Samaritan tradition, nevertheless each manuscript should be viewed as having certain independent features that are not easily classifiable; furthermore, Tov has noted that several biblical manuscripts are written in the scribal system found in the majority of the non-biblical manuscripts containing sectarian compositions and these should be viewed as a category on their own. E. Ulrich has moved the discussion in another direction by proposing that each biblical book should be viewed in turn and by observing that for some of the biblical books there existed side by side two or more literary editions: as can be seen in the case of Jeremiah, it was not always the oldest edition that became authoritative in the later rabbinic tradition. Whatever the case, the biblical scrolls from Qumran now form a very significant part of the modern scholarly understanding of how the various books of the Bible were being transmitted in the late Second Temple period.

2. The second overarching literary category contains texts that are in some way related to the Law (Torah) and its practice. Compositions that can be grouped under this heading include both sectarian and non-sectarian materials. In addition to various manuscript copies of the five books of the Law, several compositions are non-sectarian re-presentations of the Law. There are five versions of the *Reworked Pentateuch* (4Q158, 4Q364–7), which is not dissimilar to the Samaritan Pentateuch in purpose and even in the form of its text. This composition adjusts the text of the books of the Law in various minor ways so that its consistency is enhanced and its style and grammar improved. From time to time, more substantial alterations are included, such as the so-called Song of Miriam in 4Q365 6a ii 1–7, a poetic composition that

immediately precedes Exodus 15.22 and which seems to suggest that Miriam and her female companions sang a different song from that which Moses and the men had sung as recorded in Exodus 15.1–18. This previously unknown Song of Miriam shares certain features of the victory songs associated with Jewish women in the late Second Temple period, such as Judith (Judith 16.1–17) and Mary (Luke 1.46–55).

The many copies of the book of *Jubilees* and of compositions somewhat similar to it (e.g. 4Q225–7) reflect a similar interest in rewriting the biblical accounts of Genesis and Exodus so as to have particular halakhic views incorporated within an authoritative text. The book of *Jubilees* is cited with authority in other compositions found in the Qumran caves, such as the *Damascus Document* (CD 16.3–4) and the aptly named 4QText with a Citation of *Jubilees* (4Q228). It is well known, for example, that the author of *Jubilees* almost certainly wrote against the custom of some contemporary Jews when he spoke against nakedness. The *Temple Scroll* shares many features with *Jubilees* and seems to have been compiled as a collection of rewritten laws derived from Exodus 34 to Deuteronomy 22. Though it may have been re-edited subsequently at Qumran, it probably comes from the time of John Hyrcanus, before the Qumran community had come into existence.

Legal materials are found at Qumran in a variety of genres in addition to those of the Rewritten Bible. In these predominantly sectarian works direct dependence on particular scriptural passages is usually implicit and some of these compositions share features with later rabbinic collections of legal interpretations (*halakhot*) such as are found, for example, in the Mishnah. The sets of purity regulations (4Q274–84a) are a typical example of how various legal matters were sometimes grouped together according to their subject matter.

In six copies of what is compiled like an open letter (4QMMT = 4Q394–9), an author is concerned to identify his own group as having practices that his addressees would find appropriate, while others known both to him and his audience would find themselves in disagreement and so excluded. The body of this letter is a list of legal interpretations that are in effect rulings to which the addressees are invited to subscribe in the interests of their own justification and for the sake of Israel. Among the matters for which rulings are given can be found views on the right sacrificial practice for the Temple, a set of rulings concerning tithing, rulings to enforce the strict sanctity of Jerusalem, and rulings concerning meal practices. Some of these can be linked with biblical passages which they expound, but most are only indirectly related to the Law.

In the sectarian rule books, there are similar lists of rules to which readers are expected to adhere: these rule books rarely cite the Torah, but supplement it with particular regard to the life of the community, both narrowly and more widely defined. It is difficult to know how all the rule books should be related to one another. The *Rule of the Community* exists in several versions. In its cave 1 form it opens with a recollection of the liturgical basis of the admission of new members, contains a section of instruction about the two spirits, rehearses sets of rules for the hierarchical organization of the community with reference to the circumstances that have given rise to the need for such sectarian withdrawal, and concludes with a reflective poem in the first-person singular, which stresses the inadequacy of all human attempts to live up to divine demands. The authority structure this version

reflects involves members obeying rulings constructed by the Sons of Zadok, a leading priestly group. In some of the versions of the same composition from cave 4, there are similar sets of rules, but the overall text is much shorter than the cave 1 counterpart and the structures of the community seem to have changed somewhat. In place of the priestly Sons of Zadok can be read the more broadly democratic 'many'; authority seems to be based in the whole eligible community. It is not yet known precisely what relationship these two versions of the *Rule of the Community* have to one another and to any social reality at Qumran or elsewhere. There could have been a priestly reorganization of an earlier less hierarchical community, or the course of events may have been the other way round with the priestly leadership subsequently replaced by something more democratic. The regular understanding of how sectarian groups organize themselves and change over the years would suggest the former, but the relative dating of the manuscripts containing these variant versions would suggest the latter. Perhaps it was both, with the rediscovery of an originally more egalitarian practice after the community had had a period organized in a strict hierarchy.

The problem of relating the texts to the communities they represent does not stop with the *Rule of the Community*. Two compositions are appended to the cave 1 version of the *Rule*: another Rule and a set of blessings. This second Rule book is generally known as either the *Rule of the Congregation* or as the *Messianic Rule*. Like the *Rule of the Community* it depicts a community under the authority of the Sons of Zadok, the priests, but it also defines itself as 'a rule for the congregation of Israel in the last days' (1QSa 1.1). Although this definition might imply that the *Rule* is only for the future eschatological period, it could also be that several elements in the *Rule* reflect the ongoing practices of a community. For example, after describing the meal at which the eschatological priest presides in the presence of the Messiah of Israel, the text concludes, 'and according to this statute one shall act at every meal when at least ten men are gathered' (1QSa 2.21–2). Significantly in this *Rule*, there is explicit mention of the need for women and children to be instructed in the precepts of the covenant.

There is yet another rule book, the so-called *Damascus Document* (also known as the *Zadokite Fragments*), which falls principally into two parts. In the first (equivalent to CD A 1–8) there is a threefold summons to repentance followed by various exegetical passages that contain veiled descriptions of the history of the community, including its stay in the Land of Damascus (which a majority take as a code-word for Qumran). The [second part](#) is a set of rules for local communities. Among the rules are those which clearly imply that members of this group are married and interact in business dealings during the week with non-members, even Gentiles. Josephus describes the Essenes as being of two kinds, the celibate and the marrying. Perhaps the *Damascus Document* reflects the practices of those communities widely spread throughout Palestine in which marriage was permitted.

The overall characteristics of these various sectarian legal texts are patriarchal and priestly; they also pay special attention to purity. The patriarchs are presented in a positive light and as observant practitioners of the Law, even before it was given by Moses. Not surprisingly their practices correspond more or less with those of the communities reflected in the sectarian rules. Perhaps the patriarchs are being used to make the claim that the contemporary practices of the community are of greater

antiquity and therefore of greater authority than those of other Jews at the time. The practices of the patriarchs and the community they reflect are generally to be understood as stricter than those that can be surmised as characterizing the groups against which works such as the *Temple Scroll* or *MMT* may have been written. In particular, purity regulations are interpreted strictly and extended to ensure that no possible infringement might occur. Matters of cultic legislation are dealt with extensively. Even though the members of the Qumran group probably did not participate in the rites and ceremonies of the Jerusalem Temple, they looked forward to a time when God would establish the eschatological Temple in which their priests alone would be competent to officiate. This was so because the community alone knew how to behave appropriately in the last days.

3. A third overarching literary category relates broadly to the biblical prophetic traditions. As with the Law, so within this category there also survive non-sectarian Rewritten Bible compositions such as the *Paraphrase of Kings* (4Q382), the extant fragments of which are chiefly concerned with Elijah and Elisha, and the *Visions of Samuel* (4Q160). There are also compositions containing traditions about other prophets such as Jeremiah (4Q383–4, 385a, 387, 387a, 389, 390) and Ezekiel (4Q385, 385b, 385c, 386, 388, 391).

Among the compositions clearly sectarian in origin are those with a thorough-going eschatology. The *Pesharim*, so-called from their formulaic use of the Hebrew word *pesher* (interpretation), are commentaries on Isaiah and most of the books of the Twelve Minor Prophets. The sectarian commentator cites a section of the prophetic text and then provides commentary in which the scriptural text is related directly to circumstances contemporary with the community whose experiences are described as taking place within the ‘end of days’. Several other thematic commentaries have a similar agenda, linking biblical passages to the experiences and aspirations of the community. Among those aspirations are hopes that three eschatological figures would appear soon, a prophet, a priest messiah and a prince messiah. In compositions from the latter half of the first century BCE, the prince messiah is increasingly identified as the Branch of David (4Q161, 4Q174, 4Q252, 4Q285).

In addition several compositions depend upon prophetic traditions for their description of future events. The copies of the *War Rule* (1QM, 4Q285, 4Q491–7) in which the rules of engagement are provided for the series of eschatological battles is a composite work, much of which depends heavily on traditions found in the book of Daniel. Several other Danielic compositions rehearse the epochs of history with an eschatological conclusion (4Q243–5) or rework various visionary traditions such as are found in Daniel itself (4Q246). Whereas the *War Rule* is clearly a sectarian composition, the other Danielic works are probably not. There is also an intriguing list of false prophets (4Q339), the existence of which strongly suggests an ongoing interest in and practice of prophecy in the movement.

4. The fourth set of literary materials from the Qumran caves can be associated in one way or another with the works found in the Writings. Several compositions contain rewritten forms of the biblical psalms (4Q380–1). There are also numerous manuscripts that contain prayers and other liturgical texts for private or communal use: *Prayers for Festivals* (4Q507–9), *Daily Prayers* (4Q503), a confession ritual

(4Q393), and individual blessings (4Q434–7). There are also blessings and liturgical descriptions of various kinds: the *Blessings* texts (4Q286–7), the corresponding *Curses* (4Q280), and the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (4Q400–7, 11Q17), which are arranged in a sequence of thirteen for a quarter of a fifty-two-week year, with the twelfth being a description of the divine throne-chariot. Because of the generally traditional character of liturgical language, it is often particularly difficult to discern whether or not these prayer texts are sectarian. The *Prayer for King Jonathan* (4Q448), probably a prayer on behalf of Alexander Jannaeus, would seem definitely to be non-sectarian, whereas the eschatological blessings (1QSb), which form an appendix to the *Rule of the Community* in its cave 1 form, are almost certainly sectarian.

The poetic compositions also include several versions of the *Hodayot* or *Thanksgiving Hymns* (1QH, 1Q36, 4Q427–32). These poems, which are also replete with biblical imagery, are clearly sectarian in mood. In several of the individual thanksgivings the poet speaks of his gratitude in being chosen by God to be a true member of the covenant people. He has suffered persecution at the hands of his enemies in a way similar to that assigned to the servant in Isaiah 52.13–53.12. A majority of interpreters reckons that at least some of these poems were composed by the Teacher of Righteousness, the leader of the group at some point, probably in the mid-second century BCE, before the occupation of Qumran, or possibly as the community embraced its wilderness location.

Providing the appropriate calendrical setting for the use of many of these liturgical pieces, there are among the Qumran finds a significant number of compositions concerned with calendrical matters, nearly all of which seem to be sectarian in origin. These include the introduction to one of the copies of *MMT* (4Q394), the list of calendrical signs (4QOtot = 4Q319), the delineation of the priestly courses (4Q320–30, 337), the description of the phases of the moon (4Q317) and the zodiacal calendar with brontological features (4Q318), which allows the knowledgeable interpreter to declare what will happen when it thunders at particular times in the moon's cycle. All these texts are related to the kind of cosmological knowledge which is sometimes contained in wisdom compositions.

Indeed several works found at Qumran reflect the ongoing production of wisdom collections in the Second Temple period such as are found in the biblical books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. A set of ethical admonitions and cosmological teaching is to be found in the non-sectarian composition known as *Instruction* (1Q26, 4Q416–18, 4Q423). Some other wisdom texts are also thought to be non-sectarian, particularly because they contain reflections on creation of a universalist character (4Q307–8, 4Q408–13). Among the sectarian wisdom traditions are the *Mysteries* composition, which attempts to describe various cosmological secrets (1Q27; 4Q299–301), the wisdom text with a set of beatitudes (4Q525), and the physiognomical texts (4Q186, 4Q534, 4Q561).

5. The fifth category consists of all those literary compositions that cannot readily be seen as directly or indirectly dependent on biblical exemplars. The best known of these is the *Copper Scroll*, which provides details of sixty-four locations where gold, silver and various priestly accoutrements are hidden away. A minority of scholars considers that the discovery of this scroll in cave 3 proves that the whole collection of manuscripts was brought to the desert region from Jerusalem shortly before the

capture of Jerusalem by the Romans and that therefore the scrolls and the Qumran site have nothing to do with one another. Others are more inclined to suggest that the scroll exemplifies a link that was re-established between the occupants of Qumran and the Temple at the time of crisis before the Jewish Revolt (66–74 CE). Support for such a view is sometimes sought in the discovery of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* at Masada, a composition otherwise known only from the Qumran caves, and which could have been brought to Masada by a community member who was sympathetic with those trying to make their last stand against Rome. Other scholars still suggest that the treasure listed in the scroll was the accumulated wealth of the Essene movement; over 200 years, it is argued, very large sums of money would have been transferred into the care of the community's bursar. Yet others see the *Copper Scroll* as having been placed in cave 3 at a somewhat later date, and that its treasure represents the amassing of the Temple tax after the destruction of the Temple when there was nothing for it to be spent on. Whatever theory is followed, it remains the case that nobody has satisfactorily explained precisely how the quantities of treasure listed in the scroll should be translated into modern equivalents, nor has anybody yet found any of the treasure, either because it is impossible to identify its locations with sufficient precision or because others have long ago discovered it and taken it away.

Among other miscellaneous compositions included are a few letters (4Q342–3), some deeds recording various legal transactions (4Q344–9), and some accounts (4Q350–8); it is not completely clear whether these all come from Qumran or were allocated to the collection on the hearsay of those from whom they were bought. From cave 10 there is only a single ostrakon.

THE CLASSICAL SOURCES

Alongside all the manuscripts from the eleven Qumran caves three classical authors have played a major role in discussions about the identity of the occupants of Qumran and the wider movement of which they may have been a part. The oldest source is Philo (c. 30 BCE – 45 CE). In two places (*Quod omnis probus liber sit* 75–91; *Apologia pro Iudaeis* 1–18) he writes about the Essaiioi, a label he relates to the Greek word for holiness (*hosios*). Philo describes them in somewhat idealized terms as a group of over 4,000 celibate men who have enthusiastically embraced poverty, sharing what possessions they have, in order to dedicate themselves utterly to the service of God. He notes their stress on purity and that they live as voluntary associations in towns, villages and large groups throughout Palestine.

In another work (*De contemplativa* 1–2, 11–40, 63–90) Philo describes the Therapeutae, a group living primarily in Egypt, who share many features with the Essenes he has described elsewhere and whom Josephus also described, especially with regard to their daily living practice and reverence for the Torah and its study. Though it is impossible to equate the two groups as branches of the same movement, the Therapeutae also share several features with the Qumran community, even certain details such as being required to gesticulate with the right hand alone (77; cf. 1QS 7:15), and the observance of a festival calendar made up of seven-week units (65; cf. 11QT^a).

The description in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* (5.17.4), composed shortly after 70 CE, is the most significant classical source in debates about who lived at Qumran. Pliny describes the Esseni as a contemporary celibate group living a life of communal poverty on the western shore of the Dead Sea with only the palm trees for company. His remarks on the precise location of the group are somewhat ambiguous as has already been mentioned. Most scholars are happy to locate Pliny's group at Qumran, understanding that 'below' means either 'down river' or 'south' and suggesting that his reference to them in the present tense is explicable either through his lack of precise first-hand information or through the use of a source written before the likely destruction of Qumran in 68 CE. In addition, some Essenes may have moved into cells above Engedi in the first century CE; there is no need, however, to insist that that was the only place in the area where they had ever been resident.

The third major classical author who has influenced the debate is Josephus, the Jewish historian whose writings date from the last quarter of the first century CE. In both the *Jewish War* and in his *Jewish Antiquities* he writes about the Essenes as a group. He also mentions certain individual Essenes by name: Judas (*War* 1.78–80; *Antiquities* 13.311), a contemporary of Aristobulus Antigonus (ruled 105–104 BCE); Menahem (*Antiquities* 15.371–79), who apparently encountered Herod when a child as well as later when he was king and who supposedly was responsible for Herod's favourable disposition towards the Essenes; Simon (*War* 2.113; *Antiquities* 17.345–48), a contemporary of Archelaus (4 BCE – 6 CE); and John (*War* 2.567; 3.11), who was active in the Jewish Revolt in 66 CE.

The lengthiest description of the Essenes is in Josephus' *War* (2.119–61) in the context of describing the principal schools of thought in Palestinian Judaism at the time of the political unrest in 6 CE. Josephus describes how they are spread in small groups throughout Palestine and are particularly noted for the way they share their possessions. He comments on their regular prayers, especially noting those before sunrise, on their disciplined work schedules, and on their ritual washings and common meals. He notes how they refrain from taking oaths and assiduously study sacred texts. The process of admission to the group Josephus outlines corresponds closely with what is known from the *Rule of the Community*, though it is not exactly the same. The description of the organization of the community is entirely compatible with what can be reconstructed from the various rule books. One detail is commonly and rightly highlighted: Josephus notes that spitting in the middle of the company is expressly forbidden (cf. 1QS 7.13). He comments on their bravery in the face of the Romans and notes their beliefs in the afterlife, but only by speaking of their view concerning the immortality of the soul, which is not confirmed in the sectarian scrolls. He remarks that not all Essenes follow the same path of sexual abstinence – there are some who marry. One way of reading the sectarian documents from Qumran is to suppose that the majority of Essenes who did not live at Qumran were of the marrying kind, while those at Qumran and perhaps at some other important centres were abstinent as if they were in the Temple or the line of battle, for both of which biblical injunctions concerning sexual abstinence applied.

The later description of the Essenes in Josephus' *Antiquities* is shorter than that in the *War* but contains several details also found in the account of Philo, such as the numbering of the Essenes at 4,000, noting their interest in agriculture and the

absence of slavery in the movement. As has sometimes been noted, the principal differences between what Josephus says and what can be reconstructed from the scrolls about the community's organization and beliefs are to be found in the *Damascus Document*. It is thus quite possible that Josephus had some kind of direct knowledge of the movement, since he claims to have tried to be an Essene (*Life* 10–11), but that his familiarity was limited in several respects.

Overall the numerous similarities between these three classical sources on the Essenes and what can be known on the basis of the scrolls and the archaeological evidence about the group at Qumran and the wider movement of which it was a part is best explained by suggesting that the inhabitants of Qumran from the beginning of the first century BCE until the destruction of the site in 68 CE are to be identified with an evolving section of the Essenes in some form. Over a period of nearly 200 years such a movement is bound to change and it is clear from both the classical sources and from the Qumran sectarian scrolls that the agreements in detail between the two groups of sources far outweigh the few general differences, most of which can be discerned in the differences between the *Damascus Document* on the one hand and Philo and Josephus on the other. This does not exclude the possibility that in some respects their views at some points in their history could have been close to those of other groups: several scholars have justifiably noted how a few of the prescriptions in the *Temple Scroll* and *MMT* echo what later rabbinic sources ascribe to the Sadducees, while others have noted similarities to some of the views of the Pharisees.

A BASIC HISTORICAL OUTLINE

Several historical details emerge from the scroll remains, though quite how all these should be understood is still a matter of some considerable debate.

The period of the *Damascus Document*

The historical self-understanding of the movement of which the Qumran residents were a part is presented in its classic form in the so-called *Damascus Document*. The opening column of the version of the A text, which has survived from the Geniza of the Ben-Ezra Synagogue in Cairo, describes how God visited a remnant of Israelites 390 years after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. If they were able to calculate the date of that event accurately, then this divine visitation took place in 196 BCE. For twenty years, the text continues, the newly founded community was leaderless, but then a Teacher arose to lead it, the so-called Teacher of Righteousness. This may have happened during the period of political and religious turbulence leading up to the Maccabean Revolt that broke out in 167 BCE.

The Teacher of Righteousness or Righteous Teacher is an enigmatic figure. He features in only a very few scrolls: the *Damascus Document*, the *Psalms Pesher* and the *Habakkuk Pesher*. Nowhere is he named. From the *Psalms Pesher* we learn that he was a priest. Several scholars have suggested that he may even have been a high priest, the one who was displaced by Jonathan Maccabee, when he assumed the high priesthood in 152 BCE. Such an interpretation, taken together with the literal reading of

the *Damascus Document* would suggest that this Teacher was active from about 176 BCE for a generation, a period that would encompass the high priesthood of the time (149–142 BCE) for which no ancient source records the name of the high priest.

Those who understand that the Teacher of Righteousness was this displaced high priest commonly suppose that his community was fully established as a separatist group only after his removal from office in Jerusalem. Such modern interpreters also often assume that this group formation was contemporary with the occupation of the Qumran site itself. However, as has already been noted, it is highly unlikely that the first phase of the occupation of Qumran should be dated earlier than about 100 BCE. If the teacher is indeed to be associated with the deposed high priest of 149–142 BCE, then he led the movement initially in Jerusalem or elsewhere, not at Qumran.

The *Damascus Document* envisages that after the death of the Teacher there will be a final forty-year period before the end of all things. If the dates in the text are made into a total symbolic period of ten jubilees (490 years), and if the author could calculate the time since the Babylonian destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE, then it can be supposed that the *Damascus Document* itself was written sometime shortly before 96 BCE.

John Hyrcanus and his two sons, Aristobulus and Alexander Jannaeus

John Hyrcanus, the Maccabean high priest–ruler (134–104 BCE) is not explicitly named in any of the Qumran scrolls, but two compositions seem to reflect something of his life and times. He was a cultic reformer who was also concerned to centralize his power base in Jerusalem. The *Temple Scroll*, which survives in several copies, seems to refer to some of John's Temple reforms, notably the changes he made to the system for slaughtering sacrificial offerings (cf. Mishnah *Ma'aser Sheni* 5.15). The *Temple Scroll* describes arrangements for slaughtering that can be understood as reflecting what John introduced, and it does so favourably. One may suppose that those responsible for writing the particular section of the *Temple Scroll* approved of John's actions. Providing one allows that the *Temple Scroll* was compiled by members of the Teacher's movement, all this could be significant in implying that the community still exercised influence in Jerusalem in the last quarter of the second century BCE. There is thus no need to place them at Qumran then.

However, both the Jewish historian Josephus and other classical Jewish sources comment that at some point during his rule John Hyrcanus became involved in a power struggle and his political support switched from one group to another. If those responsible for the *Temple Scroll* had been inclined to view his actions favourably, possibly even influencing some of the reforms he introduced into the Temple itself, then by the end of his reign it is quite possible that they were no longer his supporters and something of the political turmoil at the end of the reign of Hyrcanus might have contributed to the establishment of the community at Qumran.

It is likely that such unease with John Hyrcanus is reflected in another composition found at Qumran. In the single column *Testimonia* (4Q175), four texts are cited as authoritative: the first three scriptural texts are probably cited as proof-texts for the three expected eschatological figures who would act as divine agents in the

end days, the prophet, the princely messiah, and the priestly messiah. The fourth extract is also found in a rewritten form of Joshua, now entitled the *Apocryphon of Joshua*. Building on the language and phraseology of Joshua 6:26, it refers to a man of Belial who is accursed and to two 'vessels of violence', a phrase borrowed from Genesis 49.5 where it refers to Simeon and Levi. Thus in *Testimonia* the text may refer to the accursed man's two sons. The action for which they are all chiefly cursed is the rebuilding of Jerusalem in an inappropriate way. *Testimonia* is commonly dated to the first quarter of the first century BCE and was almost certainly copied by the same scribe who copied the first cave version of the *Rule of the Community* (1QS). Perhaps the negative counterparts to the eschatological prophet, prince and priest were John Hyrcanus and his two sons Aristobulus and Alexander Jannaeus.

Yet another text is also commonly related to the historical circumstances of the reign of Alexander Jannaeus. The principal fragment of the *Nabum Pesher* (4QpNah) refers to a time period from Antiochus to Demetrius. Because of other matters described in various veiled ways in the *Commentary*, these two figures are widely considered to be the Seleucid kings Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Demetrius III Eukairos. Most famously the commentary refers to an incident when a furious young lion hanged people alive, a euphemism most probably for crucifixion. Classical sources inform us that Alexander Jannaeus crucified 800 Pharisees in 88 BCE because they had treasonably invited the Seleucid Demetrius III to assist them in their attempt to remove Jannaeus from the high priesthood. The *Nabum Pesher* speaks of three groups under the epithets of Judah (the community), Ephraim (the Pharisees; 4QpNahum 3–4 i 12), and Manasseh (the Sadducees; 4QpNahum 3–4 iii 9–10) whose principal characteristics and interactions seem to correspond well with what little is known of the Pharisees and Sadducees of the time of Alexander Jannaeus.

A further text may also refer to this period. As is confirmed by his bilingual coins, Alexander Jannaeus' Hebrew name was Jonathan. One scroll from cave 4 (4Q448) survives only in a small piece, which comes from the opening of the scroll, since the tab for tying the scroll together also survives. Three somewhat strangely placed columns are extant, two of which seem to belong together and in at least one place mention a King Jonathan. Most scholars identify this Jonathan with Alexander Jannaeus and suppose that the two-part poem is a hymn and prayer on behalf of the king. A minority view is inclined towards thinking of the Jonathan of this text as Jonathan Maccabee, even though that Jonathan is called king in no other ancient source. This text is probably not sectarian but could have been brought to Qumran by somebody joining the movement having become disenchanted with what those in power in Jerusalem were doing.

Alexandra Salome and the subsequent civil war

Few proper names survive in any of the Qumran scrolls. However, it is quite clear that in one annalistic historical composition (4Q331–2), a certain time of year is associated with events that took place during the reign of Salome Alexandra, Alexander Jannaeus' widow who became queen after his death and who ruled from 76–67 BCE.

In addition the same or a very similar historical composition (4Q333) refers to a certain Aemelius who is associated with killing. Almost certainly this Aemelius is to be identified with Aemelius Scaurus who was Roman Governor of Syria (65–62 BCE) at the time of Pompey's intervention in the civil strife that had broken out between the followers of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, Alexander's two sons. Salome Alexandra had favoured passing the succession to her moderate and somewhat weak son Hyrcanus, but the more nationalistically minded Aristobulus had seized control and in so doing provoked civil unrest. When Pompey intervened in Jerusalem in 63 BCE, his forces attacked those of Aristobulus, displacing him in favour of Hyrcanus who was then set up as a Roman puppet ruler. It is difficult to determine the significance of these slender references to events in the 60s of the first century BCE, but it seems that the writer of the *Historical Text* disapproved of Aemelius's action and so may have been a sympathizer of the more hardline Aristobulus.

The Herodian period

Josephus describes how the Essenes had certain privileges from Herod and how Menahem the Essene had interacted with him, gaining his approval. If the Qumran community and the wider movement of which it was a part were Essenes, then it is likely that the whole group experienced Herodian favour. The community site at Qumran was just a few miles south of Herod's winter palace at Jericho. It is unlikely that he would have tolerated the community, if they had been outspoken in their opposition to him.

One real possibility is that when Herod announced his intention to rebuild the Temple, the hopes of some of the Qumran Essenes were raised and they made a copy of their *Temple Scroll* (11Q19 was copied sometime in the latter half of the first century BCE) as a blueprint for his grand scheme. Some of the dimensions of the Herodian Temple do indeed seem to mirror what can be reconstructed on the basis of the *Scroll*, but the overall Herodian project was nowhere near as large as the *Temple Scroll* demands.

From Herod to the fall of the Masada

In the surviving fragments from the Qumran caves the majority of proper names that can be identified with known figures belong to the first half of the first century BCE. We can conclude that this was a period when the community had ongoing political concerns. Although there may have been some interaction with religious institutions and political leaders after the Roman invasion of 63 BCE, no Qumran texts refer to it explicitly. Many manuscripts are dated typologically to the Herodian period, so the community itself was not entirely inactive after 63 BCE, but it may have become somewhat more withdrawn as the expected end seemed to recede further and further into the distance. The outbreak of war in 66 CE may have encouraged some Essenes to become activist once again. The discovery of a copy of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* at Masada may indicate that at the end of the war some members of the movement joined with those who made their final stand against the Romans there.

CONCLUSIONS

The discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls are sometimes described as the greatest archaeological finds of the twentieth century. However one might measure such matters, it is clear that the scrolls are very significant. They have opened up a new chapter in how the transmission of the texts of the various biblical books is best understood. The plurality of the textual evidence for many of the biblical books is striking and cannot be lightly dismissed. The pluralism within Palestinian Judaism in the three centuries before the fall of the Temple in 70 CE has long been known, but the scrolls provide primary data which now enable scholars to see that much of the pluralism rested in arguments about the right interpretation of the Law, as well as in various cultic disputes concerning the calendar and the priesthood. Reaction to changing political circumstances also provoked different responses in the various segments of Jewish society. While the Qumran community may not continually have been as withdrawn as many have supposed, nevertheless it seems to have put its hopes principally in eschatological divine intervention rather than in physical resistance. The aspirations of the members of the movement were never vindicated as they hoped, but their legacy has resulted in a revitalizing of the study of the late Second Temple period from a distance of two millennia. The scrolls have changed the way in which the transmission of the Hebrew scriptures is viewed and they have altered how the origins of both early Judaism and early Christianity are suitably described.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

HEBREW INSCRIPTIONS



Graham Davies

INTRODUCTION: THE VALUE OF EPIGRAPHY

The study of inscriptions (or epigraphy) is a branch of archaeology that can make a contribution of special importance to the understanding of a literary text like the Bible, for several reasons. The content of these texts can, in a very general way, shed light on many aspects of life in the biblical period, religious, social, economic and political, just like other archaeological discoveries, but with the added clarity that words can give. Sometimes, though not very often, inscriptions even have a direct relationship to particular biblical passages, either because they refer to the same events or objects or because their style or phraseology is mirrored in the more complex literary works of the Bible. Again, inscriptions show how Hebrew and related languages were written in the biblical period itself and they may also provide some valuable clues to the extent and uses of literacy in ancient Israel. For reasons such as these archaeologists excavating at the site of a major ancient city often dream of finding a great quantity of inscriptions, or even an archive, and the discovery of even one such text is always a cause of excitement and anticipation of what it will say when it has been deciphered.

The number of ancient Hebrew inscriptions now known is probably larger than most readers of the Bible would imagine. If we limit ourselves to the period before 200 BC, the figure for published items was around 1,550 at the time of writing (September 1997) and is growing every year. While this figure remains small when compared with the many thousands of texts known from some of the great cities elsewhere in the ancient Near East, and nearly 1,000 of the Hebrew inscriptions are inscribed seals and seal-impressions containing only two or three words each, this is still a sizeable supplement to the corpus of written Hebrew from the biblical period. The texts are of the most varied kinds, from lists of names to carefully composed letters and from single letters of the alphabet and abbreviations to fragments of what must originally have been large stone tablets mounted on a wall for everyone to see.¹ There are also considerable numbers of texts (approaching 900 in all) written in the Canaanite, Aramaic, Ammonite, Moabite, Edomite, Philistine and Phoenician languages by various of Israel's neighbours in Palestine and Transjordan. Some of these that are of great relevance to biblical studies will be mentioned below.

THE WRITING OF HEBREW INSCRIPTIONS

I shall begin with some general remarks about the writing of Hebrew as it is reflected in the inscriptions. First, *materials and methods*.² A broad distinction can be made between incised writing using a metal stylus (Hebrew *heret*, sometimes *et*, Jer. 17.1) or another hard object, on stone, metal, wood or the hardened clay of a pottery vessel; and the use of a pen (also *et*, Ps. 45.2; Jer. 8.8) and ink, mainly on broken pieces of pottery (ostraca) as far as the extant evidence goes. But one papyrus from Wadi Murabaat, near the Dead Sea, has survived from the seventh century BC – in fact it was used twice, once for a letter and then later for a list of names and quantities (of grain?) – and it is clear from the impressions of papyrus on the back of some *bullae* (see below) that this material was in fact quite widely used. The moist conditions in most of Palestine were not as favourable to its preservation as those in Egypt, for example. Seals were occasionally made of metal but generally of stone, often precious coloured stone, and they were pressed into clay while it was still soft, the writing being inverted on the seal but true on the impression, which might be on the handle of a jar or a lump of clay (*bulla*) placed over the string that tied up a papyrus scroll. The Hebrew word *seper*, often translated ‘book’, probably never refers in the biblical period to anything like a modern book, which did not yet exist, but is a general word for any kind of written document from a letter (as frequently in the Lachish ostraca) to a lengthy literary work such as the text about Balaam to be described below or the ‘book’ of the law (Deut. 28.61 etc.).

Secondly, the *script*. Hebrew and its sister languages were written from right to left in an alphabetic script that had its origins in the middle of the second millennium BC.³ The classical scripts of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia used characters that represented syllables or even whole words, and consequently the number of symbols was very large. Two simpler systems of writing, simpler at least to write but not to decipher, were devised in the Levant, both based on the alphabetic principle of a single (consonantal) sound being represented by each sign. One system, known mainly from the vast archives of texts found at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) in Syria, was a simplified version of the Mesopotamian cuneiform script with just thirty characters. A few texts in a script like this are known from Palestine, but its use was short-lived: all the examples known are from between about 1400 and 1200 BC. The other system drew its inspiration from Egyptian hieroglyphs and began with the same ‘pictorial’ basis, but employed the ‘acrophonic’ principle, that is, the sign represented only the first sound (‘letter’) of the word for the object portrayed. The earliest such inscriptions go back to at least 1500 BC. Comparatively few examples of this ‘proto-Canaanite’ script are known, but an important subgroup are the ‘proto-Sinaitic’ inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadim in the Sinai peninsula, which one recent study holds to be the oldest of all.⁴ It was from this latter system that the scripts of the early first millennium in Palestine, and in due course the Greek alphabet and our own, were developed.

The letter-forms in use during pre-exilic times (down to the early sixth century BC) were very different from those seen in modern printed Hebrew Bibles or even medieval manuscripts. To distinguish this script from the later ‘square script’ it is generally referred to as ‘palaeo-Hebrew’. Although it was largely superseded by the

square script among Jews, it has been retained (in a modified form) by the Samaritans to the present day and it is also found on some Jewish coins of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, as well as in a number of biblical manuscripts from Qumran. In the inscriptions there is no full system for marking the vowels (such a system was introduced only in the sixth or seventh century AD) and no punctuation except for the frequent but not universal use of a dot as a word-divider between words. There are several early inscriptions in which part or all of the alphabet is written out, either in exactly the order still used (Lachish, Kuntillet Ajrud once) or with the single difference that *pe* is placed before *ayin* rather than after it (Kuntillet Ajrud twice: the same order appears in Lam. 2.16–17; 3.46–51; 4.16–17 in alphabetic acrostic poems in the Bible, whereas Lam. 1.16–17 has the normal order). One of the earliest inscriptions that may be Hebrew, from Izbet Šartah, also has this variation, together with two others that may be simple errors. Similar abecedaries are known from neighbouring peoples and it is plausible to associate them with the process of learning to write, perhaps in some kind of school. Whether there were schools in ancient Israel is a much debated matter, but such sequences of letters, especially when they are combined with other likely school exercises such as standard letter introductions (as at Kuntillet Ajrud) or lists of numerals (as at Tell el-Qudeirat) give strong support to the more indirect evidence that has been brought forward in support of their existence. Certainly there must have been some means by which scribes were trained to write in the fluent regular script of many inscriptions and to use the system of numbers and other signs largely borrowed from Egypt.⁵

This leads directly to questions about literacy and the uses of writing in ancient Israel, for which the inscriptions provide important but not entirely undisputed evidence. Many of the documents come from either administrative archives in major cities (e.g. Samaria, Lachish, Jerusalem) or royal outposts (Arad) or from the specialized craft of the seal-cutter, and so suggest that writing was largely the province of professional scribes. But there are also a number of more crudely written inscriptions, for example marks of ownership on jugs or graffiti in caves, which show that the ability to write was not limited to such circles, at least where short, simple texts were concerned. What can be said about the beginning and the spread of writing in ancient Israel? There is no doubt that the great majority of the inscriptions so far known come from the eighth century or later: a recent very careful study dated only twenty-two items to the tenth and ninth centuries.⁶ In particular the large administrative archives only begin to appear in the first half of the eighth century (Samaria) and the biggest concentrations are from the late seventh and early sixth centuries (Arad, Lachish, etc.). On this basis some would conclude that writing only became widespread in Israel in the eighth century. Against this it is pointed out (especially by A. R. Millard) that this ignores the possibility that in earlier centuries perishable materials such as papyrus were used more exclusively and these simply have not survived in Palestine as they do in Egypt.⁷ Evidence for the use of papyrus, though at a later period, has already been noted. Surviving texts, in some cases of considerable extent, from neighbouring peoples also strongly suggest that the use of writing was well known in the early Israelite monarchy. The earliest inscriptions of any length from the Phoenician cities to the north are from the eleventh and tenth centuries (Byblos) and there are several substantial inscriptions of the ninth

century deriving from Israel's neighbours in the east and north-east: the inscription of Mesha (the Moabite Stone), the Amman Citadel inscription, the Deir 'Alla plaster texts and, the most recently discovered, the Aramaic inscription from Tel Dan. It is hardly reasonable to deny to Israel a degree of competence so clearly attested among their neighbours, even if the accidents of discovery have not so far produced a comparable text in Hebrew.

THE EARLIEST TEXTS FROM IRON AGE PALESTINE

In its earliest form the Hebrew script was close to its Phoenician parent and as a result there is debate about whether some of the earliest alphabetic inscriptions from Palestine are Hebrew or Canaanite. Recent historical studies of the origins of the Israelites, which have tended to emphasize the Canaanite element in early Israel, only make the arguments more complex. However, on the basis of the places where they were found being within the Israelites' boundaries, a case can be made for regarding the texts from the early Iron Age described in the rest of this paragraph as being at least possibly Hebrew. Five inscribed bronze arrowheads with the words *hš 'bdlb(ʿ)t*, 'arrow of 'Abdlabi(ʿa)t', are dated to the late twelfth century and are said to come from el-Khadr, 3 km (2 miles) west of Bethlehem, close to the Iron I site of Giloh.⁸ They belong to a group of similar arrowheads, not all inscribed, which have mainly been found in southern Lebanon. El-Khadr lies within the area occupied by the tribe of Judah, but the owner of these arrowheads bore a name taken to mean 'servant of the Lioness', which might be a title of the Canaanite goddess Anat. On one of the arrowheads 'Abdlabi'at is actually called 'son of Anat'. As will appear later, such names can be a valuable clue to the religion of the communities in which they were used, and this name has a good Canaanite pedigree. If these arrowheads belonged to an early Israelite, he was not a very orthodox one! In the excavation of the Iron I site at Izbet Šarṭah, 19 km (12 miles) east-north-east of Tel Aviv on the edge of the hills claimed by the tribe of Ephraim, an ostrakon was found containing about eighty crude incised letters in five lines.⁹ The first four lines appear to be meaningless sequences of letters, but the bottom line is the alphabet already mentioned, which exceptionally is written from left to right. Probably the whole piece is an exercise of someone at a very basic stage of learning to write. The 'Gezer Calendar' of the tenth century, incised on a small limestone tablet now in Istanbul, may also be a writing exercise.¹⁰ Gezer was an important centre, which, according to 1 Kings 9.15–16, was captured by the Egyptian Pharaoh from its 'Canaanite' (more likely Philistine) rulers and given as a dowry to his daughter when she married Solomon, who made it one of his fortified cities. If the text belongs quite late in the tenth century, as seems likely, this would place it in the period when Gezer was an Israelite city and make its classification as Hebrew probable. The contents of the text are most interesting:

Two months thereof [are for] ingathering. Two months thereof
[are for] sowing. Two months thereof [are for] late sowing.
A month of cutting flax.

A month of barley harvest.
A month of harvest and measuring.
Two months thereof [are for] pruning.
A month of summer fruit.
Abi[jah?].

This is clearly a description of the agricultural year beginning, somewhat curiously, at the end of the yearly cycle in the late summer with the ‘ingathering’ of olives and grapes. The words for ‘ingathering’ and ‘harvest’ are identical to those used in Exodus 23.16 for two of the major religious festivals and this shows how closely Old Testament worship was originally tied to agricultural life. The name at the end may be that of the trainee scribe.

FOUR TEXTS FROM ISRAEL’S NEIGHBOURS TO THE EAST

The few inscriptions of the tenth and ninth centuries that are more definitely Hebrew are short and uninteresting, and it is more worthwhile to digress briefly and discuss the four ninth-century inscriptions from Israel’s neighbours that were mentioned above. The best known is the inscription of Mesha king of Moab, often called the Moabite Stone.¹¹ It was found at Dhiban, ancient Dibon, east of the Dead Sea in 1868 and is now in the Louvre. The Moabite language is practically indistinguishable from Hebrew, at least in its written form. The text begins:

I am Mesha, son of Chemosh[-yat], king of Moab, the
Dibonite. My father reigned over Moab for thirty years, and I
reigned after my father. I built this *bamab* for Chemosh in QRHH,
a *bamab*(?)
[of deli]verance, for he delivered me from all attacks (on me) . . .
(lines 1–4)

From the end of line 4 a long section deals with Moab’s wars with the kings of Israel, beginning with Omri, who is named twice; there follow further references to Mesha’s building works and, finally, a damaged section that describes fighting in Horonaim. The Bible contains no specific account of Omri’s war with Moab (but see 1 Kgs 16.27 for his ‘power’). However, Moab’s subjection to Israel is presupposed by the account in 2 Kings 3 of a ‘rebellion’ by King Mesha and an attack on Moab from the south by an alliance of Israel, Judah and Edom. The overall outline of this account is very similar to what Mesha himself records, at least if Horonaim was in the south of Moab, and there is some evidence for this (Isa. 15.5). The inscription is thus a valuable historical source for events in the middle of the ninth century BC. It also sheds some light on Moabite religion: the national god is Chemosh, who is mentioned eleven times (cf., e.g., 1 Kgs 11.7) and what is said about him corresponds closely to claims made in the Old Testament about Yahweh (note in the extract above: ‘he *delivered me* from all attacks [on me]’). Other aspects of the religion are also similar to Yahwism, for example the use of *bamab* (often translated

'high place' in the Bible) as a regular word for a shrine (as in 1 Sam. 9.12–14) and the practice of 'utter destruction' or more precisely 'sacrifice by destruction' (*herem*), when an enemy city was captured.

A stone inscription discovered in excavations on the Citadel at Amman (ancient Rabbath-Ammon, the capital city of the Ammonites) has been dated to the middle of the ninth century.¹² It contains only eight lines, which are damaged at both the beginning and the end. It apparently records a prophetic oracle in the name of the Ammonite god Milcom, which includes both instructions about building and assurances to the king of victory and prosperity. The precise meaning is not at all clear, but one line appears to say that 'in all the rows (of pillars?) the righteous shall spend the night'. This and other aspects of the text have suggested to some scholars that the prophecy may have provided the god's authorization for the building of a temple.

The Balaam inscription, written in ink on plaster, from Tell Deir 'Alla in the central Jordan Valley, is certainly an account of prophetic phenomena.¹³ It was found during excavations in 1967, broken into countless pieces after falling with the wall on which it was mounted as a result of an earthquake. The date of this destruction forms a *terminus ante quem* for the writing of the inscription and the excavators now propose a date for this c. 800 BC on the basis of carbon-14 dating of organic remains in the same level. This would put the inscription itself in the late ninth century. Some scholars prefer a slightly later date. There has been much argument about the language of the inscription. It bears some characteristics of Aramaic, but not enough to convince all. It may be a hitherto unknown local language or dialect. The script is certainly related to the Aramaic scripts and this would fit well in the later ninth century when Transjordan was under Aramaean domination (2 Kgs 10.32–3; see also below), whereas in the eighth century this area was recovered by Israel (2 Kgs 14.25; Amos 6.13).

The inscription, as its name implies, describes an episode (possibly more than one) in the life of Balaam son of Beor, known from Numbers 22–4 as a prophet who was active in Transjordan. The new text bears no direct relation to the biblical story and it presents Balaam as an entirely pagan prophet. It begins as follows:

{This is the doc]ument [about Bala]am, [the son of Be]or, the man (who is) a seer of the gods. He it was to whom the gods came by night [and they spoke to hi]m according to El's command and they said to [Bala]am, the son of Beor, thus: . . . shall make . . . And Balaam rose up the next morning . . . And he co[uld] not [eat, and he fa]st[ed], and his people came to him. And th[ey said] to Balaam, the son of Beor: Why are you fasting? [And w]hy are you weeping? And he said to them: Sit down! I will tell you what Shagg[ar will do]. And come, see the work of the go[d]s! [The god]s gathered together and the Shaddai-gods took up their position in the assembly, and they said to Sh[aggar]: You may break the bolts of heaven . . . (after Smelik 1991: 83–4)

Balaam had evidently brought a message of doom and the less well preserved lines that follow may be his explanation of the reason for the gods' judgement. The name of the god in whose name Balaam speaks here seems to be Shaggar, a lunar deity

known from Ugaritic and Mesopotamian texts. Nevertheless there are some interesting similarities of detail to the biblical narratives about Balaam: there too Balaam 'sees the vision of the Almighty (*Shaddai*)', he has a vision in the night, his father's name is Beor, he comes from Mesopotamia and he is expected to deliver a message of doom (Num. 22.5, 8–13; 24.4, 16).

The Deir 'Alla text gives no indication of whether Balaam was a figure of the recent past when it was written or an ancient seer whose teachings had been preserved in a similar way to those of the biblical prophets. The biblical references place Balaam in the context of Moabite hostility to the Israelites' original settlement in Canaan, which would favour the latter alternative, but the possibility cannot be discounted that this association is anachronistic and that the biblical stories originally belonged to the time of some later war with Moab, closer to the date of the Deir 'Alla text.

Most recently, in 1993 and 1994, in excavations at Tel Dan in northern Israel three pieces of a basalt stele have been found, probably originally written in the late ninth century.¹⁴ The script fits such a date and the broken pieces were found in secondary use in a pavement of the early eighth century. The language of the text is Aramaic and the contents, which refer to Hadad as the writer's god and to his victories over at least one Israelite ruler, imply that the stele was originally set up by a Syrian ruler, presumably after his conquest of Dan. The breaking up of the stele and its reuse as paving stones presuppose that the city had by then been liberated from Syrian control. This sequence of events corresponds in general terms to what can be learned from the biblical narratives about relations between Syria/Aram and Israel when Hazael conquered large areas of Israelite territory (see the passages cited above, p. 275). The stele seems to have included the names of two Israelite kings, '[]ram son of . . . king of Israel' and '[]iah son of . . . [kin]g of the House of David (i.e. Judah, Aram. *bytdwd*)'. This interpretation of the final phrase has been disputed, but it is most probably correct. If these two kings were contemporaries, they can only be Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah, who ruled according to the biblical chronology in the 840s. There is, however, then a serious historical problem because, while 2 Kings 8.28 does refer to these two kings fighting against Hazael (and to the wounding of Jehoram), in a later passage they are said to have been killed by Jehu, who seized the throne of Israel from Jehoram c. 842 (2 Kgs 9.14–28), whereas the stele seems to say that Hazael killed them both.

INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

In the early eighth century there begin to be some inscriptions of some length written by inhabitants of the northern kingdom of Israel itself. What are probably the earliest of these come, rather surprisingly, from an outpost in the desert in the far south, known today as Kuntillet Ajrud.¹⁵ Three features of these texts, which include inscriptions incised on stone and clay vessels, but also some written in ink either on wall-plaster or on the outside of storage jars (pithoi), link them to the northern kingdom. One text refers, it seems, to 'Yahweh of Samaria', a specific manifestation of the national god in the capital city; at the end of theophoric names

the divine name appears as *-yw* (*-yaw*) rather than *-yhw* (*-yahu*), following the northern pronunciation (cf. the Samaria Ostraca below); and some inscriptions are in the Phoenician script, which is attested otherwise only in the north. What brought northerners to this desert area is uncertain, but the semi-fortified character of the building in which the inscriptions were discovered and the objects found in it make trade rather than religion the most likely explanation. The texts are, however, chiefly interesting for the light they shed on the religion of those who wrote them. The Phoenician texts mention Baal and El as well as Yahweh and there are several references to Yahweh's *asherah*, which has been understood both as a cultic object, perhaps a stylized tree representing a goddess of fertility, and as the name of the goddess herself. Further references to this goddess or her cult symbol (which are also mentioned in the Old Testament) appear in somewhat later inscriptions from the Philistine city of Ekron and a burial inscription from Khirbet el-Qom in Judah. These are important indications of the worship of a Canaanite goddess among the Israelites (and the Philistines), but to judge from the relatively few epigraphic references to her she was in no sense a rival to Yahweh in the way that Baal was.

A slightly later group of texts, from Samaria itself, provides further evidence for the popularity of Baal worship in Israel referred to in the Old Testament (see 1 Kgs 16.31–3; 2 Kgs 10.18–28; Hosea *passim*). These are the Samaria Ostraca, found during excavations of the acropolis of the Israelite capital in 1910.¹⁶ They appear to be receipts of some kind, most likely records of annual contributions to the palace provisions by the farmers of (royal?) estates in the kingdom. Many of the texts follow one of the following patterns:

In the ninth year. From Quṣeh. For (*or of*) Gaddiyaw. A jar of old wine.
(no. 6)

In the tenth year. From Seper. For (*or of*) Gaddiyaw. A jar of clear (literally 'washed') oil. (no. 16)

In the 15th year. From Heleq. For (*or of*) Aša (son of) Ahimelech. Heleş.
From Haşerot. (no. 22)

The first two types record a date, a place from which the produce came, the name of the person who received (or sent) it, and the nature of the produce. The third type contains additional names of persons and places (including the district as well as the town), but no indication of the nature of the produce. Many of the place-names can be identified with districts, clans or towns in the vicinity of Samaria that are known from references in the Bible or names of modern Arab villages. The personal names provide some evidence of religious affiliations. Many names in biblical times were theophoric, that is, they included the name of a god, and it is reasonable to suppose that the god in question was revered by the parents of the person so named. The personal names in the Samaria Ostraca are of various types (and some may be of Egyptian rather than Israelite origin), but those including a form of the name Yahweh are only slightly more numerous than those formed with 'Baal'. For example, alongside Abiyaw, 'Yahweh is my Father', there is Abibaal, 'Baal is

my Father'. It is true that the word *ba'al*, which means 'lord' or 'husband', was sometimes used as a title for Yahweh (cf. Hos. 2.16), but it is unlikely that all the onomastic evidence can be explained in this way. It probably indicates that among the families who sent their produce to the royal palace there was quite a high proportion who worshipped Baal as well as or instead of Yahweh.

Finally, the dates. Only three dates appear on the surviving ostraca, referring to the ninth, tenth and fifteenth years of one or more kings. The style of the pottery used for the ostraca and the script point to the first half of the eighth century. Around this period the Bible knows of only three kings who reigned over Israel for fifteen years or more, Jehoahaz (c. 815–801), Joash (c. 801–786) and Jeroboam II (c. 786–746).¹⁷ At the latest, therefore, the 'fifteenth' year group would belong to approximately 772 BC and the 'ninth year' and 'tenth year' groups would be somewhat earlier.

Two seals of royal officials from the northern kingdom are also of great interest. The seal of 'Shema servant of Jeroboam' was found in excavations at Megiddo in 1904 and will come from the long reign of Jeroboam II.¹⁸ It is larger than most Israelite seals and bears a fine representation of a roaring lion. Unfortunately the original seal was lost and only a bronze cast of it survives. Very recently a seal with a similar inscription, whose precise provenance is as often unknown, was published: it bears the name of 'Abdi servant of Hoshea', Hoshea (c. 732–724) being the last king of the northern kingdom.¹⁹ In this case a human figure is engraved in an 'Egyptianizing' style on the seal and there is a winged sun-disc beneath him that betrays a similar cultural background. (Similar seals of 'servants' of three eighth-century kings of Judah, Uzziah, Ahaz and Hezekiah, are also known.²⁰) The 'servant of the king' (this form of the title appears on several other Hebrew seals) was a high office of state, known also from the Old Testament (cf. 2 Kgs 22.12), a predecessor of the modern 'minister of the crown'.

INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH

From the southern kingdom of Judah a few inscriptions are known that date to the first three-quarters of the eighth century, but they are mainly lists of names or 'delivery notes' of the same general kind as the Samaria Ostraca. It is only in the last quarter of the century, corresponding to the reign of Hezekiah and the time of the prophet Isaiah, that we begin to have evidence of fuller texts. But this evidence is suddenly quite extensive, so that either there was a great increase in literacy at this time or similar evidence for earlier periods has not survived. This might be because perishable materials were used or because, as A. R. Millard has suggested, finds made by archaeologists tend to be from the years immediately preceding a major destruction, and Judah escaped such a catastrophe until the Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib in 701.²¹

The largest group of these inscriptions are over twenty ostraca from the fortress of Arad, which lay east of Beersheba on the southern border of Judah, close to the desert. Once again, many of them are evidently administrative documents, usually quite brief. But one is a letter (no. 40) that refers to troubles with Judah's Edomite neighbours on the southern border and asks for information about the difficulties to

be passed on to 'the king of Judah'. The writers seem, from the deferential language they use ('my lord . . . your servant'), to be officials or army officers who are subordinate to Malcijah, the recipient of the letter and probably the commanding officer at Arad then.²²

There are also several inscriptions of this period from Jerusalem. Some, again, are short administrative records that in isolation do not tell us very much. But several carved in stone indicate the use of writing for more substantial texts. The best known is the Siloam Tunnel inscription, discovered at the lower end of an underground channel that brought the waters of the Gihon spring on the east slope of Jerusalem to a point in the south where they were more easily accessible to inhabitants of the new western quarter of the city.²³ The text is worth quoting in full:

. . . the breakthrough. And this is the story of the breakthrough. While the stoneworkers were wielding their picks, from both sides, and when there were still three cubits to dig through, a man's voice was heard calling to his mate, because there was a crack in the rock from right to left. On the day when they broke through the stoneworkers struck the rock from both sides, pick against pick, and then the waters flowed through from the spring to the pool, a distance of 1200 cubits. The height of the rock over the heads of the stoneworkers was 100 cubits.

Although inscribed on a well-prepared surface and in a fine script, the text does not conform to the usual ancient Near Eastern pattern of building inscriptions, which attribute public works to the king and describe the whole construction and not just its final stage. The location of the inscription, where it would rarely be seen, is also unusual. Someone, perhaps the official in charge of the work, evidently thought that such a major feat of engineering should be commemorated on the spot.

On the opposite side of the Kidron valley, at the foot of the slope on which the Arab village of Silwan now stands, a large number of well-made chamber-tombs have been found, and in four cases inscriptions survived by their entrances. The most interesting of these, now in the British Museum, reads as follows:²⁴

This is [the grave of . . .]iah, who was 'over the house'. There is no silver or gold here, but only [his bones] and the bones of his maidservant with him. Cursed be the person who shall open this [grave].

The phrase 'over the house' was a title for another leading official at the royal court, 'house' referring here to the palace, and 'royal steward' is a good paraphrase. Several such officials are known, both from the Old Testament (e.g. 1 Kgs 4.6) and from a seal and seal-impressions that have come to light in modern times. One such official, Shebna, is rebuked by the prophet Isaiah for the extravagant tomb he had prepared for himself (Isa. 22.15) and, given the likely date of this inscription, it has been tempting to read the partially preserved name as a fuller form of his name, Shebaniah.

Further evidence of royal administration, though its precise significance is uncertain, comes from stamped seal-impressions on the clay handles of a type of storage jar found in excavations at many sites in Judah. These are of two types. One has the

phrase *lmlk*, 'For (or of) the king', together with one of four place-names: Hebron, Socoh, Ziph and Mamshat (the vowels of the last name are uncertain).²⁵ The first three names were towns in the outlying parts of the kingdom, which may have been depots for supplies under royal control. Mamshat is a mystery, as no place of that name is known at the time. A popular and plausible suggestion is that it stands for the capital Jerusalem, but no convincing explanation of how this is so has been given. The other types of stamp that may be relevant here contain, like many others, the names of individual persons and their patronymics. But the large number of some such stamps that survive, and the fact that they appear regularly on the same type of jar as the *lmlk* stamps, has suggested that they may belong to officials at one or other of these depots, who marked consignments of produce as they arrived or were despatched to where they were needed.²⁶

Far fewer inscriptions are known from the first half of the seventh century. This may, at least in part, be due to the depletion in the territory of Judah after Sennacherib's invasion in 701. The largest number come from Jerusalem, but except for one they are ostraca with little legible content. The exception is part of a formal inscription on stone on which a few tantalizing words can be read.²⁷ Both the script and the thickness of the stone suggest that it was originally part of a large stele (comparable perhaps to the Moabite Stone) on which building works, for example, may have been recorded. Two other fragments of stelae are known, one from Samaria and one from Jerusalem: the latter contains what may be a date, 'on the seventeenth [day of the] fourth [month]'. These fragments point to the existence of, probably royal, 'display inscriptions' in the capital cities of Israel and Judah.

By contrast, a much more mundane use of writing is represented by the sixty-two inscribed jar handles found in excavations at el-Jib (Gibeon), a few miles north of Jerusalem.²⁸ The archaeological evidence clearly associates these handles with the huge centre of wine production that existed here in the eighth and seventh centuries BC. Typically the inscriptions (which are poorly written) consist of the name 'Gibeon' followed by two personal names, presumably the names of the vineyard owner(s) and/or the wine merchant(s) who produced and stored the wine. One of the names, represented by the letters *gdr*, has been the subject of great discussion, but there are strong reasons for reading it as the personal name Gedor (cf. 1 Chr. 8.31; 9.37). The inscriptions thus correspond to modern wine labels. Isolated inscriptions from other sites describe wine as 'smoky' or 'dark' (unless the words in question are again place-names).²⁹

Other inscriptions from this period are the papyrus from Wadi Murabaat (p. 271) and two groups of very interesting texts from unpromising provenances, a burial cave at Khirbet Beit Lei in western Judah and a fortress in the desert south-east of ancient Arad, now known as Ḥorvat 'Uza. The burial cave inscriptions are of two kinds.³⁰ One consists of curses, in the fullest case (probably) against 'whoever erases (this)', a formula known from other inscriptions in both Hebrew and Phoenician. The others, which may or may not be connected, are a collection of prayers and hymns addressed to Yahweh. One simply asks, 'Yahweh, deliver (us/me)!' A second, as generally understood, praises Yahweh as 'the God of all the earth' (cf. Ps. 97.5; Isa. 54.5) and 'the God of Jerusalem'.³¹ A third has been understood both as a prayer and as a thanksgiving: according to some scholars it refers to Jerusalem by

the name 'Moriah' and the phrase 'the abode (*nwb*) of Yah, Yahweh'. These graffiti are informative about the piety of at least some rural folk in the time around or shortly after the Assyrian invasion of Judah in 701 and Isaiah's prophetic ministry: they show that devotion to the religious significance of Jerusalem was not limited to the capital itself.

Thirty ostraca were discovered at Horvat 'Uza in the 1980s, but only five of them have been fully published so far.³² One is a (probably later) Edomite letter, with a greeting in the name of the Edomite god Qôš. Three are lists of names, probably of Judaeans military officers and their subordinates, and in one case place-names indicate where the men came from. Alongside these administrative documents is one that has been described as a 'literary' text, but its interpretation is still disputed. It appears to open by placing two alternative options before an individual and then to threaten that individual ('you') that a third party ('he') will violently punish him: the final words are 'your grave will be desolate'. The style is elevated and very similar to some prophetic passages, but there is no explicit indication in the surviving text that the 'he' is a god, as one would expect if it were a prophetic threat. But such an interpretation remains possible.

ARCHIVES AND OTHER TEXTS FROM THE LATE MONARCHY PERIOD

From the later seventh century and the early sixth century, which may conveniently be taken together, there is once again an abundance, relatively speaking, of epigraphic material, including especially the large archives of ostraca from Arad and Lachish. This is probably connected with the revival and expansion of Judah in the time of Josiah. Of the 107 Hebrew ostraca found at Arad nearly half are now dated to the end of the monarchy. They include the so-called 'Eliashib archive', a group of eighteen letters addressed to Eliashib, who was apparently the commander of the fortress at Arad at the time.³³ All but one of these, together with two other ostraca, were found together in what seems to have been a record office, perhaps (to judge from the content of the letters) for the distribution of provisions. One example must suffice:

To Eliashib. And now, give to the Kittim 2 *bat* of wine for the four days and 300 [loaves of] bread and a *homer* full of wine. You shall take it round tomorrow, do not delay. And if there is any vinegar left, you shall give it to them. (no. 2)

Clearly Arad was a sort of depot from which supplies of bread and wine (and in other cases grain or oil) were delivered to military units nearby. In some ostraca specific dates are mentioned, and 'sealing' of the jars. The 'Kittim' named here appear several times in the ostraca: the term refers to Cyprus or the Greek islands generally in the Old Testament (e.g. Jer. 2.10). Probably Greek mercenaries in the Judaeans army are meant. In general the Arad Ostraca seem to reflect a calm situation for the garrisons on the southern border of Judah. Only in two cases are there clear references to the wider political background. Ostrakon 88 reads like the first orders of a new Judaeans king:

I have become king in [all?] . . . strengthen [your?] arms . . . the king of Egypt . . .

Its fragmentary preservation is tantalizing, the more so as Egypt played an important role in the politics of the time. Ostrakon 24 calls on Eliashib, by royal authority, to send assistance to Ramat-Negeb to prevent an Edomite incursion there. It is likely that this ostrakon, and perhaps others too, relates to the time in 598/7 when Judah was invaded by the Babylonians and its Edomite neighbours to the south and east took the opportunity to move into southern Judah (cf. Jer. 13.19). Reference has already been made in passing to the Edomite ostrakon from Horvat 'Uzza and in later centuries this whole area came under Edomite control, as reflected in the later Greek name for it, Idumaea.

The Lachish Ostraca, several of which are in the British Museum, bear more marks of a time of crisis.³⁴ Twenty-one inscriptions were discovered in the debris of the final destruction of Iron Age Lachish, a major city, about 40 km (25 miles) southwest of Jerusalem, in a room of the outer city gate. The date of this destruction was shortly before the final capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 and the deportation of many of its inhabitants into exile. Jeremiah 34.7 is evidence that Lachish was one of the last cities outside Jerusalem to fall to the Babylonians. The majority of these ostraca are letters and the whole group is sometimes loosely referred to as 'The Lachish Letters'. Three of them name the recipient, perhaps the governor of Lachish, as Yaush, and the deferential language ('my lord', 'your servant') shows that the writers are subordinate officials, presumably in neighbouring towns. The number of references to letters (strictly 'documents', *sepārîm*, but for this meaning see 1 Kgs 21.8, etc.) in these texts gives the impression of a rapid interchange of messages between the officials in the area and also between them and the capital. At one point there is a reference to 'watching for the signals of Lachish'. One letter appears to criticize instructions from Jerusalem as being likely to weaken morale. Another speaks of a report that the army commander, Coniah by name, was on his way to Egypt, probably to negotiate for Egyptian help in the crisis of the Babylonian attack (cf. Jer. 37.5). It is fascinating to read these documents against the background of the later chapters of Jeremiah, in which different policies for dealing with the Babylonian threat are considered and accusations of collaborating with the enemy are targeted on Jeremiah himself. The Lachish letters also contain two clear references to a 'prophet' (*bnb'*). One contains only the fragmentary phrase '[]iah the prophet', but the other is slightly more informative:

The letter of Tobiah the servant of the king which came to Shallum son of Yaddua from the prophet, saying 'Beware!' – your servant sent it to my lord. (no. 3)

It was suggested early on that this prophet might be Jeremiah. But there is no real basis for this, and the book of Jeremiah itself attests that he was by no means the only prophet in Jerusalem at the time.

Two smaller groups of ostraca from a little before the final death-throes of the monarchy add in different ways to our knowledge of contemporary life. During

excavations of a fort near Yavneh-Yam on the coast south of Jaffa, six ostraca were identified.³⁵ On five of them only a few letters could be read, but they seem to be delivery notes of some kind. The sixth inscription was well preserved and quite different in type, and it deserves to be quoted in full:

Let my lord, the commander, hear the word of his servant. Your servant is a reaper. Your servant was in Ḥasar Asam, and your servant reaped and measured out and stored [the grain], as on [other days], before stopping. When your servant had measured the crop and stored it as on [other] days, Hoshaiiah son of Shobay came and took the garment of your servant, and all my companions will bear witness for me – those who reaped with me in the heat of the [sun] – my companions will bear witness for me. Truly I am innocent of [guilt, so let me have] my garment back and let me get full recompense [*or* 'And if not (i.e. even if I am not innocent of the charge against me)']. It is the duty of the com[mander to recover the garment] of his serv[ant, so may you show] him pi[ty and hear] the [appeal of your se]rvant and not be silent [i.e. inactive] . . .

The translation of the last few lines is not entirely certain, but the text is clearly an appeal from a farm labourer to the fort commander, who presumably had judicial authority, for the return of a garment that had been taken from him. His protest of innocence shows that there was another side to this dispute, but the strength of his demand suggests that he had right on his side, in the form of the laws forbidding the retention overnight of a garment taken in pledge, that is, as guarantee for a loan (Exod. 22.26–7; Deut. 24.12–13).

The other group of ostraca comes from Tell el-Qudeirat, a fortress in the desert to the south of Judah, which is generally thought to mark the site of Kadesh-barnea named in the stories of the wilderness journeys after the Exodus (see, e.g., Deut. 1.2, 19, 46).³⁶ Seven ostraca were found here in the final stratum of the fortress, from the late seventh century. They are all apparently scribal exercises, or aids to the education of scribes. One contains what may be part of an alphabet, another repeated words: but the rest are full of signs for numbers and measures such as the shekel or the gerah. In some cases the numbers or quantities were written out in sequence: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800, 900, 1000, 2000 . . . up to 10,000. Not all the sequences are complete, and sometimes the order is mixed up. One gains the impression that a teacher would write out, or perhaps dictate, the numbers for a trainee scribe to copy. In one case the same number, 2,382, is written several times on the same ostrakon – was this a punishment, perhaps, for a lazy pupil? Two features of these inscriptions deserve comment. The numerical symbols (and some of the others) are close to the system used in the Egyptian hieratic script. In fact many of these same symbols appear elsewhere: for example at Arad and on inscribed stone weights from a number of sites. Evidently in this respect Hebrew scribes borrowed from the highly literate civilization of Egypt to the south. It was not the only such borrowing of which we know: for example the names of some of the state officials at the Judean court seem to be modelled on those of Egypt, and a section of the book of Proverbs

(22:17–24:22) has so many similarities to the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope that literary dependence on the part of Proverbs has seemed likely to most scholars. The other peculiarity is that such inscriptions are there at all. Why should quite complex scribal exercises be found in a far-off fortress, rather than in one of the major cities of the country? A similar question can be raised about some of the inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud. It is perhaps a possibility that scribes were sent to an outlying part of the kingdom to learn their craft away from the distractions of the city, rather like a public school in the heart of the English countryside. But it is more likely that these examples are the exceptions rather than the rule and relate to the training of scribes to serve specifically in the army. It is clear from the Arad and Lachish Ostraca that by the end of the monarchy period a good deal of military communication, whether about provisions or about the movement of troops, was being done in writing. It must then be regarded as largely a matter of chance that so far much of the evidence for scribal education comes from military outposts far from Jerusalem. But perhaps not entirely chance. In the cities it is likely that papyrus would have been more easily available and, if it was used there for such exercises, the perishable material would not survive and this would explain the absence of evidence where it might be most expected to be found.

Archaeology is full of surprises, but it could not have been expected, when excavations began at some tombs near St Andrew's Church in Jerusalem, that the finds would include two inscriptions that bear a remarkable resemblance to a passage in the Old Testament.³⁷ Beneath one of the tombs was a repository in which grave-goods and bones from earlier burials had been thrown to make room for new interments. Among the grave-goods were two small silver scrolls, and when they were unrolled it gradually became clear that the texts on them included, along with personal names and some other words, phrases from the priestly blessing in Numbers 6.24–6:

May Yahweh bless [you and] keep you; may Yahweh make [his fa]ce shine
[upon you] . . . (Scroll 1)

May Yahweh bless (you) and keep you; may //Yahweh// make his face shine
[upon] you, and give you peace. (Scroll 2)

The first text is broken at the end and may have included the same final phrase as the second, but neither text includes the words 'and be gracious to you; may Yahweh lift his countenance upon you', which are found in the biblical passage. The texts are not simply extracts from a biblical manuscript. But the occurrence of even a part of the well-known blessing on what seems likely to have been a kind of amulet, probably worn around the neck, is of great interest. The majority of the grave-goods in the repository are from the seventh and sixth centuries and the small, crude writing on the scrolls, while difficult to date, is compatible with an origin around the time when Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians.

CONCLUSION

Many more examples could have been included in this survey, some with possible correlations with persons mentioned in the Bible or with the practice of religion.³⁸

Enough has been said, however, to show the widespread use of writing in the later monarchy period and to suggest that, on a more limited scale, it was known earlier as well. The inscriptions also shed light on many aspects of everyday life in ancient Israel and Judah, as indicated at the beginning. They give a glimpse of agricultural life, royal bureaucracy, the training of scribes, military affairs and a variety of religious practices. Occasionally there are more direct references to events or personalities (especially kings) mentioned in the Bible.

NOTES

- 1 For an analysis of the genres represented see J. Renz and W. Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik*, Vol. 2/1: *Die althebräischen Inschriften*. Part 2: *Zusammenfassende Erörterungen, Paläographie und Glossar*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995, 1–33.
- 2 See in general G. R. Driver, *Semitic Writing: From Pictograph to Alphabet* (Schweich Lectures 1944), 3rd edn, London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1976, 78–87.
- 3 Driver 1976: 128–97; J. Naveh, *The Early History of the Alphabet*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1982.
- 4 B. Sass, *Studia Alphabetica: On the Origin and Early History of the Northwest Semitic, South Semitic and Greek Alphabets* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 102), Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991, ch. 2.
- 5 A. Lemaire, *Les écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l'ancien Israël* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 39), Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981; G. I. Davies, 'Were There Schools in Ancient Israel?' in J. Day, R. P. Gordon and H. G. M. Williamson (eds), *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 199–211.
- 6 See the tables in Renz and Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik*, Vol. 1: *Die althebräischen Inschriften*. Part 1: *Text und Kommentar*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995, 11.
- 7 A. R. Millard, 'The Knowledge of Writing in Iron Age Palestine', *Tyndale Bulletin*, 1995, vol. 46, 207–17.
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- 9 G. I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, no. 35.001; K.A.D. Smelik, *Writings from Ancient Israel*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1991, 20–1.
- 10 Davies 1991: no. 10.001; Smelik 1991: 21–7; J. C. L. Gibson *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, Vol. 1: *Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, 1–4.
- 11 Smelik 1991: 31–50; Gibson 1971, 1: 71–83.
- 12 W. E. Aufrecht, *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions* (Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 4), Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989, 154–63; Smelik 1991: 89–90.
- 13 J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir 'Alla* (Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui 19), Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976; M. M. Ibrahim and G. van der Kooij, 'The Archaeology of Deir 'Alla Phase IX', in Hoftijzer and van der Kooij (eds), *The Balaam Text from Deir 'Alla Re-evaluated*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991, 16–29; Smelik 1991: 79–88.
- 14 A. Biran and J. Naveh, 'An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan', *Israel Exploration Journal*, 1993, vol. 43, 81–98; idem, 'The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment', *Israel Exploration Journal*, 1995, vol. 45, 1–18.
- 15 Davies 1991: nos. 8.001–23; Smelik 1991: 15–60.
- 16 Davies 1991: nos. 3.001–7; Smelik 1991: 55–62; Gibson 1971, 1: 5–13.
- 17 The dates cited in this chapter are taken from J.A. Soggin, *An Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah*, London: SCM Press 1993.
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- 21 A. R. Millard, 'The Last Tablets of Ugarit', in *Actes du colloque 'Le pays d'Ougarit autour de 1200 av. J.-C.'* (Ras Shamra-Ougarit 11), Paris: ERC, 1995, 121–2.
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- 23 Davies, op. cit., no. 4.116; Smelik, op. cit., 68–71; Gibson, op. cit., 1: 21–3.
- 24 Davies, op. cit., no. 4.401; Smelik, op. cit., 72–5; Gibson, op. cit., 1: 23–4.
- 25 Davies, op. cit., nos 105.001–20; Smelik, op. cit., 133–5; Gibson, op. cit., 1: 64–6.
- 26 Y. Garfinkel, 'The Distribution of Identical Seal-Impressions', *Cathedra*, 1984, vol. 32, 35–52 (Heb.).
- 27 Davies, op. cit., no. 4.125 (cf. 3.312 and 4.120); Smelik, op. cit., 55, 76.
- 28 Davies, op. cit., nos 22.001–62; Smelik, op. cit., 132–3; Gibson, op. cit., 1: 54–6.
- 29 Davies, op. cit., nos 1.025, 030, 26.001.
- 30 Davies, op. cit., nos 15.001–8; Smelik, op. cit., 165–7; Gibson, op. cit., 1: 57–8.
- 31 For a different interpretation see P. D. Miller, 'Psalms and Inscriptions', *Vienna Congress Volume* (Vetus Testamentum Supplements 32), 1981, 320–3.
- 32 Davies, op. cit., no. 37.001; I. Beit-Arieḥ and B. Cresson, 'An Edomite Ostrakon from Ḥorvat 'Uza', *Tel Aviv*, 1985, vol. 12, 96–101; I. Beit-Arieḥ, 'An Inscribed Jar from Ḥorvat 'Uza', *Eretz Israel*, 1993, vol. 24, 34–40 (Heb.); I. Beit-Arieḥ, 'A Literary Inscription from Ḥorvat 'Uza', *Tel Aviv*, 1993, vol. 20, 55–63.
- 33 Davies, op. cit., nos 2.001–18; Smelik, op. cit., 105–13; Gibson, op. cit., 1: 49–54.
- 34 Davies, op. cit., nos 1.001–21; Smelik, op. cit., 116–31; Gibson, op. cit., 1: 32–49.
- 35 Davies, op. cit., nos 7.001, 003–7; Smelik, op. cit., 93–101; Gibson, op. cit., 1: 26–30.
- 36 Davies, op. cit., nos 9.001–6, 009.
- 37 Davies, op. cit., nos 4.301–2; Smelik, op. cit., 160–2.
- 38 E.g. the *bullā* of Berechiah (Baruch?) son of Neriah the scribe (Davies, op. cit., no. 100.509; Smelik, op. cit., 146–7) and several objects inscribed with the word 'holy' (Davies, op. cit., nos 2.104, 5.005, 24.014, 99.001; Smelik, op. cit., 162–3).

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE CAIRO GENIZAH



Stefan C. Reif

Great religions, like ordinary individuals, constantly reinterpret the ideas and events of their past in the light of current developments and future expectations. Those curious to know the nature of beliefs and practices many centuries ago are therefore always anxious to remove the intellectual deposits of later periods and uncover materials that represent earlier layers of information. Manuscripts represent a major component of such materials and if they greatly pre-date what has previously been available, and have lain undisturbed for centuries, they assume even greater importance. Modern students of the Hebrew Bible, who are naturally keen to understand how that remarkable source of religious inspiration was used and interpreted by the Jews at critical periods in their history, have been greatly assisted by the discovery of two outstanding caches of such documents, the first made in 1947, and the second in 1897. The scrolls from the Judean desert illuminate many of the religious ideas and customs of Jewish groups in the last years of the Second Temple period and during the time when Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism were taking form, and their relevance to the history of biblical texts and interpretation has been discussed in an earlier chapter. The thousands of manuscript fragments from the Cairo Genizah, though dating from almost a thousand years later, are equally important for our understanding of equivalent developments in the early medieval period. Neither the transmission of the text nor the history of its interpretation has consistently stood at the centre of the kind of 'Old Testament' scholarship that has predominated since the middle of the nineteenth century. There has, however, been a growing tendency in recent years to rectify such neglect and in this connection to pay more attention to the evidence from manuscript treasures. To that end, what needs to be offered in this chapter is a brief explanation of the origins of the Cairo Genizah, followed by a summary of the significance of its stained, worn and crumpled folios for various aspects of biblical study.

The earliest occurrences in Hebrew literature of the root *gnz* are in the books of Ezekiel, 1 Chronicles and Esther where it refers to the storage of valuable items, with a similar usage in the Aramaic sections of Ezra. Given that the first of these examples carries the Persian suffix *-ak* and that aspects of these texts may reflect a Persian imperial environment, it is probable that the entry into Hebrew was through Persian. Nevertheless, the root is attested not only in Hebrew and Aramaic but also



Figure 16.1 Synagogue official searching a hole in the ground for Genizah treasures in Basatin Cemetery, Cairo, c.1979 (Cambridge University Library).

in Arabic, Ethiopic and Late Babylonian with the meanings of ‘hide’, ‘cover’ and ‘bury’ and it therefore had early use if not authentic origins in the Semitic world. In the talmudic and midrashic literature of the first few Christian centuries, it carries similar senses and is used to describe special treasures stored away by God, such as the Torah and the souls of the righteous. In those sections of such literature that relate to Jewish religious law (*halakhah*), however, the root takes on a technical sense describing the removal from circulation of some item that is or has at some stage been regarded as sacred, whether legitimately or illicitly, and is now ruled inappropriate for ritual use. Such items may include religious texts controversially purporting to be canonical or authoritative, materials once used in worship, capricious transcriptions of the tetragrammaton, or effects about whose status there is unresolvable doubt. As Jewish law developed and synagogal ritual became more formalized, it became customary for communities to set aside a *bet genizah*, or simply *genizah*, into which could be consigned texts of the Hebrew Bible that were damaged or worn, as well as other Hebrew texts, including tracts regarded as heretical, that contained biblical verses or references to God. The rationale for such behaviour lay in an interpretation of the third commandment that proscribed the obliteration of the name of God but the principle appears to have been extended by many Jewish

communities to the protection of a variety of Hebrew and Jewish literature, all of which might lay some claim to a degree of sacredness. If it is true that the adoption of the codex by the Jews in about the eighth century led to an explosion of Jewish literary activity, the problem of the disposal of obsolete items must soon have become a pressing one and the use of a *genizah* a more frequent and standard occurrence.

If such an extensive application of the law was indeed a feature of oriental Jewish communities of the post-talmudic and early medieval periods, it is only to be expected that *genizot*, or what would be defined by modern scholars as precious archival collections, were amassed in many areas of Jewish settlement. There is indeed evidence that where some communities made 'assurance double sure' by burying the unwanted texts in the ground to await the natural process of disintegration, there were others that removed them to caves or tombs, sometimes storing them first in suitable vessels. It is perfectly plausible that the Qumran scrolls represent just such a *genizah*, although there is clearly room for dispute about the immediate reason for the removal. Sadly, however, the survival rate of such *genizot* has not proved impressive, the ravages of time and climate on the one hand and the vicissitudes of Jewish history on the other either ensuring a return to dust or denying later generations adequate knowledge of where a search might even be commenced. Fortunately, however, in at least one case, the first stage of consignment into the synagogue *genizah* appears not to have been followed by removal to a cave or burial place and scientific study of Jewish literature has consequently been greatly enriched.

The Jewish community of Fustat or Old Cairo appears to have been established soon after the Muslim conquest of Egypt in the seventh century and to have settled in the area of the old Byzantine fortress known as 'Babylon'. There is certainly testimony to a synagogue in the ninth century and it is possibly on the site of that house of worship, perhaps formerly occupied by a church, that the Ben-Ezra Synagogue was built or rebuilt in the eleventh century. The survival of that community *in situ* for 900 years; the dry climate of Egypt; the central importance of the city to Muslim and Jewish history for a number of centuries; and the reluctance of the Jewish communal leaders to take any action in the matter of its *genizah* other than to expand its contents with all forms of the written word – all these factors contributed to the survival there of a collection of fragmentary Jewish texts that is historically at least as significant as the Qumran scrolls.

The 'Cairo Genizah', as it has come to be called, has bequeathed to the modern historian of Hebrew literature well in excess of 200,000 items, or about 800,000 folios, of text mainly dating from about a thousand years ago, written in various languages, but particularly in Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic, on papyrus, vellum, cloth and paper, and containing a wide variety of subject matter. In addition to the field of Bible studies, such disparate topics as rabbinics, philology, poetry, medicine and magic have been virtually revolutionized by the Genizah discoveries and the more mundane documents found among the fragments have made possible a reconstruction of daily Jewish life in the Mediterranean area during the Fatimid period. Although scholarly visitors and dealers during the second half of the nineteenth century ensured that famous libraries in St Petersburg (Leningrad), Paris, London, Oxford, Cambridge and New York ultimately each acquired thousands of fragments,



Figure 16.2 Ben-Ezra Synagogue, view from outside, 1979 (Cambridge University Library).

and that other institutions also took smaller shares of the spoils, it was the Reader in Talmudic and Rabbinic Literature at the University of Cambridge, Dr Solomon Schechter, who made a famous journey to Cairo in the winter of 1896–7 to investigate the precise source of the fragments that had been arriving from Egypt. Having located it in the Ben-Ezra Synagogue, he persuaded the Chief Rabbi of Cairo, Rabbi Aaron Raphael Bensimon, to allow him to remove 140,000 items to Cambridge and thereby to create there a mecca for Genizah scholarship.

The study of the Hebrew Bible has been one of the fields most closely affected by the results of such scholarship. What emerges from the latest international research relates not only to the content of the fragments but also to the nature of the medium by which the text was transmitted. While this latter field of study is still at an early stage, it is becoming clear that Jewish scribal techniques made major advances from the ninth century onwards and that this had a significant impact on the quality and consistency of the scrolls used for synagogal rites and on the early development of the biblical Hebrew codex. Differences in format between early and

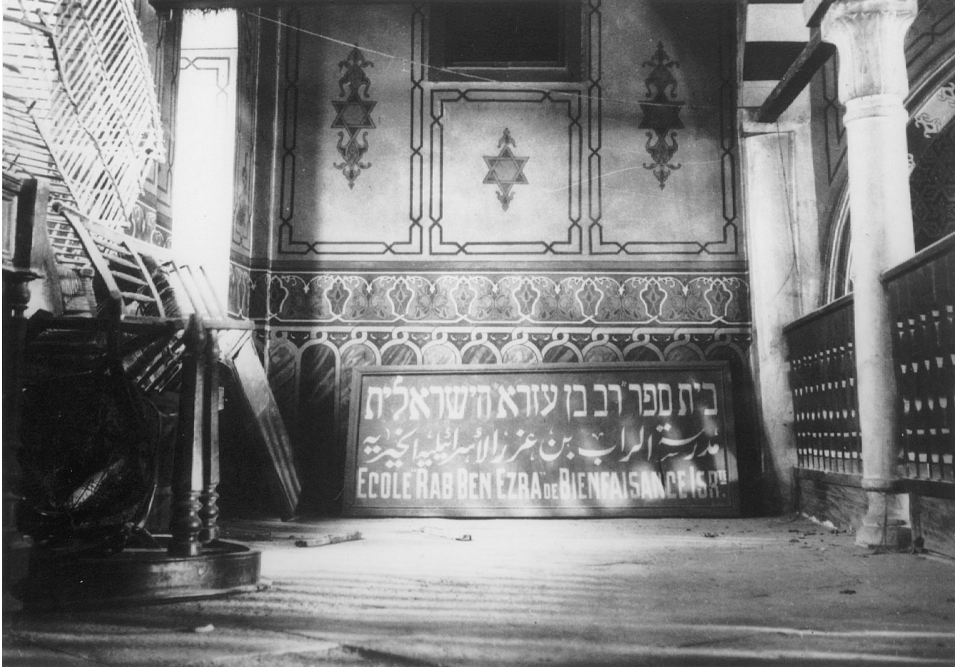


Figure 16.3 Genizah entrance in a wall of the Ben-Ezra Synagogue in Cairo (Cambridge University Library).

late Genizah material stand testimony to the degree to which the technical details of Hebrew Bible production were of increasing importance to Jewish custom. As far as the synagogal scroll is concerned, it has recently been pointed out that the initial opposition to the Arabic *raq* among the oriental rabbinic authorities gradually gave way to its adoption. The methods used, which included soaking in water and lime rather than tanning, and were probably influenced by European techniques, produced a better quality of split skin. Initial examination of the Genizah evidence appears to confirm an increasing preference for the improved product. With regard to the codex, used for purposes other than that of the synagogue ritual, the simple, even primitive, folios and codices gradually gave way to altogether more elaborate and systematically produced volumes. A whole range of scribal techniques evolved, qualities of vellum began to be differentiated, and paper began to challenge the place of vellum as the primary material for the transcription of texts. Quires were composed with greater care and consistency, catchwords were included, sections numerated, lines justified in a variety of ways, folios pricked and ruled, and the ruling-board was employed to facilitate the planning of the lines. Standards of illustration and illumination gradually improved, making use not only of the more oriental style of micrography but also of art forms that were more typical of the West. The private and public libraries that began to spring up in North Africa, including Egypt, as early as the ninth and tenth centuries, included numerous examples of biblical texts.



Figure 16.4 Schechter at work at Cambridge University Library 1898
(Cambridge University Library).

As far as the consonantal text and its layout are concerned, it is perhaps not surprising to find that most of the Genizah texts may be linked to one or other of the major medieval codices that served as models for copyists, such as those of Aleppo, St Petersburg and Cairo, and that the variants, though certainly worthy of attention, are not therefore substantial in number or significance. Some are valuable and reflect genuine readings, others are simply the result of careless or unprofessional copying. For use in textual criticism, they must all be individually assessed. Where major discoveries and novel historical assessments have been made has been in the area of vocalization systems for the Hebrew Bible. It is now clear that the standard Tiberian system of Ben-Asher, so sanctified since the period of late manuscripts and early prints by both tradition and scholarship, was only one of a number of such systems that were in vogue throughout the Jewish world from the period of the earliest systematic Masoretic activity, say in the eighth and ninth centuries, until their almost total replacement by the standard system some five or six hundred years later. Three major systems, one supralinear Palestinian, one sublinear Tiberian, and one supralinear Babylonian are clearly attested, and combinations of the various systems were also devised in an effort to create a more sophisticated reflection and record of Hebrew pronunciation. Although such variant systems gave way to the Ben-Asher method before the invention of printing and that method was ‘codified’



Figure 16.5 T-S K11.54. Ruling board for use by scribe (*mastara*)
(Cambridge University Library).

in the Bible produced by Jacob ben Asher and published by Daniel Bomberg in Venice in 1524–5, remnants of non-standard vocalization systems may still be found in non-biblical Hebrew texts throughout the sixteenth century.

It is of course self-evident that the earliest history of traditions concerning the pronunciation and transmission of the Hebrew Bible must go back to the biblical period itself. The talmudic rabbis too spoke of authoritative versions of both the text and the manner of reading it and followed a number of principles concerning the explanation and exegetical exploitation of textual curiosities. The definition and recording of vowel-points would appear, however, to be a development of about the seventh century. Whether inspired by the Syriac Christian example, by Muslim concern for the accuracy of the Qur'an, or by an internal feud with the Karaite Jews who preferred the biblical to the rabbinic traditions, a novel attention to the accurate recording of the vocalized text of the Hebrew Bible created a whole new field of Jewish scholarship, among both Karaites and Rabbanites. The Genizah evidence is not early enough to shed light on the initial stages of such scholarship but it does contribute generously to our knowledge of its subsequent expansion. Schools of Masoretes (from the Hebrew root *msr* meaning 'to count' and then 'to transmit') flourished in the two main centres of Jewish population, Palestine and Babylon, and

made it their task to surround the text of the Hebrew Bible with vowel-points that reflected their pronunciation tradition, cantillation signs that recorded the melodies used for its synagogal chant, and explanatory notes that inevitably testified to their understanding of the text, whether inherited or newly fashioned. Such a tendency towards the canonization of an aspect of liturgical expression may well have owed a good deal to the formalization of synagogal procedures that was characteristic of developments in the geonic period.

Both Karaites and Rabbanites were active in the Masoretic process and it seems that much of the impetus came from the biblical scholars among the former. It is indeed not always an easy matter to distinguish which of the famous personalities associated with the early history of the Masorah belonged to one group and which to the other. What is clear is that scholars are now in a better position to understand the identifying features of each method and the basic differences between the various schools. Treatises and scholars, hitherto unknown or accorded scant recognition in later manuscripts, have been more clearly identified and new sets of vocabulary and terminology have been uncovered. Such an interest in the text read and translated before the congregation in the synagogue naturally had an effect not only on exegesis (as will shortly be noted), but also on the development of Hebrew philological studies. Once texts and their interpretation became more consistent and authoritative, the way was open for comparisons to be made by keen linguists of the features of the various Semitic languages known to them. Grammatical rules were consequently drawn up, textbooks and dictionaries compiled, and the literal interpretation of the biblical verse given a boost by such systematic approaches. It should not be forgotten that such grammatical and philological studies provided the foundations on which was built much of the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, by both Christians and Jews, in the later medieval and modern times.

In the earliest years of Genizah research, now over a century ago, the discovery of the Palestinian triennial cycle for both the Pentateuchal and prophetic weekly readings generated great excitement and led scholars to believe that they were now in a position to reconstruct what precisely had been read in the synagogue on particular sabbaths of the year from as early as the time of Jesus. Attempts were therefore made to relate the homilies of both the New Testament and the rabbinic midrashim to the Palestinian cycle and to establish the precise time of the year in which it commenced. More recent work has moved away from such theories and demonstrated that the primary sources bear witness not to one Palestinian cycle and one Babylonian but to a number of possible variations in the Holy Land and to the possibility that each influenced the other from the talmudic to the medieval period. Although the Babylonian cycle as it emerged from the Iraqi talmudic centres in and around the tenth century came to dominate Jewish synagogal practice worldwide, the reports of the traveller Benjamin of Tudela in the twelfth century and Genizah material from the thirteenth testify to the continuing struggle waged by the community of Palestinian emigrés in Cairo to maintain their own traditions and to withstand the pressure to conform to the customs of the Babylonian academies. It is not, however, only the liturgical traditions of the synagogue that are represented in the Genizah collections since Syriac and Greek versions are to be found there, albeit lurking under later Hebrew texts in a number of palimpsests dating back as early as the fifth or



Figure 16.6 T-S 20.50. Palimpsest of Greek and Hebrew (Cambridge University Library).

sixth century. Those redoubtable women who inspired Schechter's trip to Cairo and then worked enthusiastically with him on sorting his finds at Cambridge University Library, Mrs Agnes Lewis and Mrs Margaret Gibson, were given responsibility for the Syriac texts and edited thirty-four of these. They count among the earliest set of Palestinian (and one Edessene) texts of the Syriac Bible, covering four books each in the Old and New Testaments.

Other palimpsests dating from between the fifth and ninth centuries contain Greek texts of the Gospels, Acts and 1 Peter, of Origen's *Hexapla* on Psalm 22 and of Aquila's renderings of parts of Psalms 90–103 and Kings. Aquila's version, written in the second century probably under the influence of Rabbi Akiva, was profoundly literal, no doubt for good theological reasons, and was widely used by Jewish communities in the Greek-speaking diaspora; hence its inclusion in the columns of the *Hexapla*. Since the Genizah fragments are derived from an independent text of Aquila and not from the *Hexapla* and have been dated to the fifth or sixth century, it is possible to regard them as evidence that these Jewish communities continued to use his version until the conquest of the Near East by the Arabs in the seventh century and the subsequent linguistic takeover of the area by Arabic. On the other hand, unless such Jewish communities were more theologically liberal than has hitherto been supposed, the presence of palimpsests of New Testament texts is perhaps more convincingly explained as the result of the acquisition by Jews (through Muslims?) of second-hand writing material from Christian sources. The nearest Jewish Aramaic

equivalent to Aquila is the authoritative and synagogal translation ascribed to a contemporary of his, the proselyte Onqelos. Whether or not Aquila is, as has sometimes been suggested, identical with Onqelos is not clarified by the Genizah texts, but they do have much to add to our knowledge of the development of that popular genre of Aramaic translation known simply as *targum*.

Examples of Onqelos, Jonathan, Palestinian and fragmentary targums are to be found and are naturally important for the textual (and perhaps pre-textual) history of these versions. It is, however, in the area of more diverse targumic material that surprise discoveries are still being made. Some items are directly related to festivals or other special occasions and to their synagogal lectionaries, while another variety constitutes aggadic expansions often inserted into Onqelos texts. One genre provides poems on themes such as the death of Moses, or the praiseworthiness of the month of Nisan, or of Jonathan ben Uzziel, and there are others that abbreviate Onqelos, provide Masorah for the same version, offer a Judaeo-Arabic translation of Palestinian targum, or incorporate halakhic interpretations of verses that run counter to what is found in the Talmud. It should also be noted that the collections of targums may reflect a particular lectionary cycle, Pentateuchal or prophetic, which may turn out to be novel for records of either Babylonian or Palestinian traditions. A recently published description of the targumic manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah collections lists over 1,600 items, dating from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries, and this would indicate that there are from Cairo well over 2,000 pieces of targum that are generally older than any other manuscript attestations to medieval targumic traditions, a fact of profound significance to the latter's textual as well as exegetical study.

Because the custom of translating the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic was an ancient one, prescribed by Jewish religious law (*halakhab*), it was not abandoned when Arabic replaced Aramaic and Greek as the predominant Jewish vernacular but was incorporated with an Arabic rendering into a trilingual version. Such Judaeo-Arabic renderings of the biblical readings, written in Hebrew characters and reflecting the popular Arabic dialect of the Jewish communities, appear to have come into existence at least as early as the ninth century. They provided the inspiration for the tenth-century leader of the Babylonian Jewish community, the Egyptian scholar Sa'adya ben Joseph of Fayyum (882–942), to compose his own Judaeo-Arabic version, the text and spelling of which were destined to become the standard translation for the oriental Jewish communities for the remainder of the medieval period. But Sa'adya was not only a translator of the Hebrew Bible; he also composed a commentary, more and more of which has recently come to light and has demonstrated how, as a philosopher, he struggled to rationalize much of Scripture but without overdoing the degree of literalness. The exegetical work of his successor as head of the Sura *yeshivah*, Samuel ben Ḥofni, has also been rescued from the Genizah and is characterized by his desire to impose systems of classification on his treatment of the biblical texts.

Of other exegetical material in Hebrew and Arabic from that same Egyptian source, some is extended, some brief; there are those who make use of the latest syntactical and philological theories while others prefer traditional midrashic methods; philosophy inspires one commentator, kabbalah another. New discoveries reveal for the first

time how scholars such as Judah ibn Balaam and Moses ibn Gikatilla handled difficult verses from the Hebrew Bible in the intellectual atmosphere of eleventh-century Spain. By then, the tensions between the literal and applied senses of Scripture had grown and the cause of the former was then carried forward in Spain and France while the latter tended to recover an honoured place as the situation of Jews in the Orient deteriorated after the period of the Fatimid dynasty. The move towards the literal interpretation had been championed by the Karaites, whose linguistic interest and textual orientation in the golden age of their biblical studies in tenth- and eleventh-century Jerusalem led to a high level of lexical and syntactical exegesis. Suspicious as they were of the rabbinic traditions, they produced their own word-for-word translations, alternative renderings, and interpretations, amounting to what a recent researcher has defined as 'scientific literalism'. There is no doubt that the Karaites and Rabbanites exercised both positive and negative influences on each other and that the Rabbanites were torn between a desire to steal the copyright of the devil's best tunes and the need to avoid betraying what they saw as the authentic nature of the talmudic-midrashic interpretation of Scripture. The Karaites too were not without their polemical intent, as is indicated by the strange phenomenon of surviving folios of their Bibles from Palestine and Egypt in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that record the text of the Hebrew Bible in Arabic characters with Hebrew vowel-points.

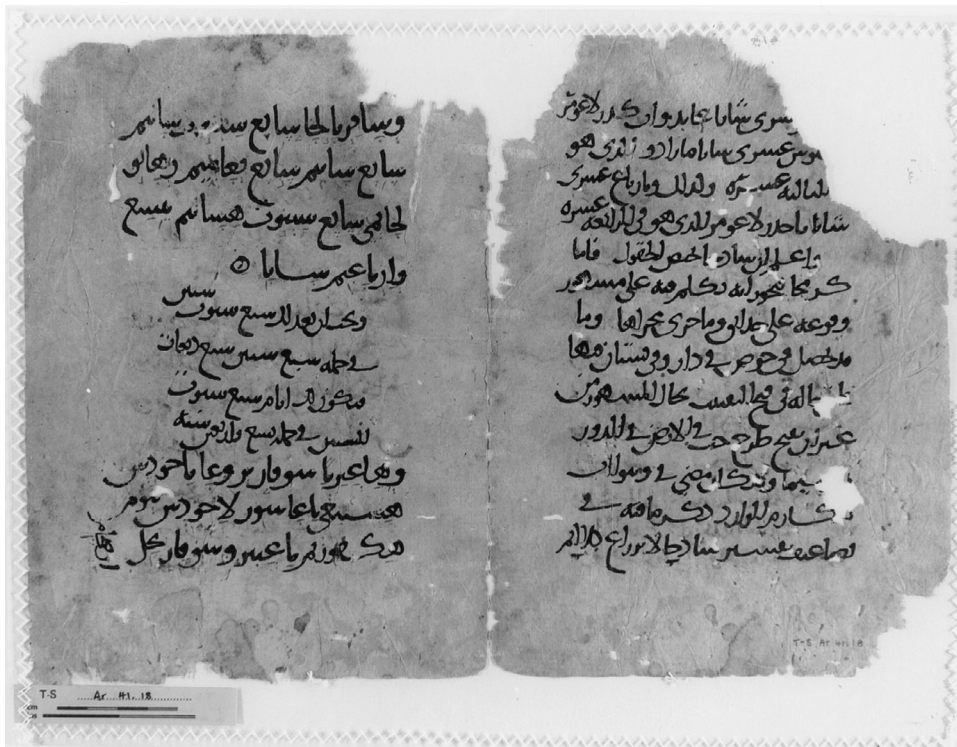


Figure 16.7 T-S Ar.41.18. Hebrew Bible in Arabic characters
(Cambridge University Library).

If Geoffrey Khan's theory is correct, such an idiosyncratic system was employed as a means of retaining an independent religious identity in the face of Rabbanite influence and incursion. Other strange combinations of languages that occur in the Genizah include Judaeo-Greek, Judaeo-Persian, Judaeo-Spanish and Judaeo-German, and a number of texts in these Jewish dialects written in Hebrew characters testify to the manner in which their speakers understood and approached the Hebrew Bible.

Whatever the variety of their exegetical intent, their literary structure, and their geographical and chronological provenance, what all midrashim have in common is that they represent in one way or another a major history of Jewish commentary on the Hebrew Bible. It is therefore not surprising that contemporary understanding of the development of such an important rabbinic genre in the post-talmudic period also owes much to Genizah research. Hitherto, the earliest manuscripts were medieval, from the early periods of major Jewish settlement in European countries, while now there are thousands of fragments written at a much earlier date and representing older textual traditions. Such traditions are more likely to preserve the authentic form of the midrash since later editions and copyists tended to treat anything unusual as erroneous and to harmonize it with what had already become standard or authoritative for them. While such a statement may be made about all the well-known midrashim of the 'classical' talmudic period, for which the Genizah provides useful textual variants, it is especially true of the halakhic midrashim dating from then, such as the *Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael* on Exodus, *Sifra* on Leviticus and *Sifrey* on Numbers and Deuteronomy, the original halakhic statements of which were not always permitted to survive. Halakhic midrashim for which no complete codices survive have also surfaced in the Genizah collections and considerably expanded the horizons of the Hebrew literary historian. Fragments have been identified of the *Mekhilta of Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai* on Exodus, of the *Sifrey Zuta* on Numbers and of the *Mekhilta* on Deuteronomy, and these have been or are being exploited for the creation of new scientific editions.

In the standard aggadic field too, discoveries of new midrashim, particularly of the *Tanhuma Yelammedenu* homiletical variety on the Pentateuch and of the exegetical treatments of the hagiographical books such as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, have added greatly to our knowledge of developments during the post-talmudic and early medieval ages, and the identification of new anthologies from the last period of midrashic activity have demonstrated how use was made of earlier material to build up a Jewish exegetical overview of biblical texts. Perhaps more important than anything else, there is a whole fresh set of new or little-known midrashim that testify to the fact that medieval Jewish interpretation of the Hebrew Bible could be distinctly colourful and heterogeneous. Fanciful expansions of biblical accounts, apocalyptic visions and mystical works were among the earliest midrashim acquired from the Genizah and quickly published by various scholars. As such a variegated approach to the Bible gave way to the more linguistic and philological commentaries of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries, so the written evidence from the Genizah also records the influence of the centralized Babylonian authorities in inspiring the change and thereby thwarting some of the Karaite efforts to discredit rabbinic interpretation as lacking the serious, literal dimension.



Figure 16.8 T-S K5.13. Child's Hebrew alphabet primer (Cambridge University Library).

Since the Genizah contains not only literary items but also mundane documentary material, it is not surprising to find fragments relating to the place of the Hebrew Bible in everyday Jewish life. Since an ability to read simple biblical and rabbinic Hebrew was a prerequisite for active participation in synagogal worship, most of the male community was introduced to the Bible at an early age. Simple texts, sometimes in alphabet primers, were used by children, and girls were sometimes educated in the Bible, particularly bright ones becoming teachers of the subject. In one sad little Genizah fragment, a father bewails the loss of such a daughter, recalling her intellect, her knowledge of Torah and her piety, as well as the lessons he used to give her. Items from the Genizah are also significant in writing the history of both the illumination of the Hebrew Bible and the melodies used for chanting it. Incipits and colophons are on occasion colourfully treated in an oriental style, while the famous eleventh- and twelfth-century Jewish proselyte from Christianity, the Catholic priest John Oppidans, converted as Obadiah Ha-Ger, took the trouble to record for posterity the music to be used for particular parts of the contemporary Jewish liturgy, including biblical verses. Fragments of incunables and early editions of the printed Hebrew Bible, some of them on vellum and others not yet with vowel-points, are another feature, albeit a limited one, of Genizah collections.

It remains only to make brief reference to items that are either already widely familiar or are only indirectly related to biblical studies. The recovery of the Hebrew

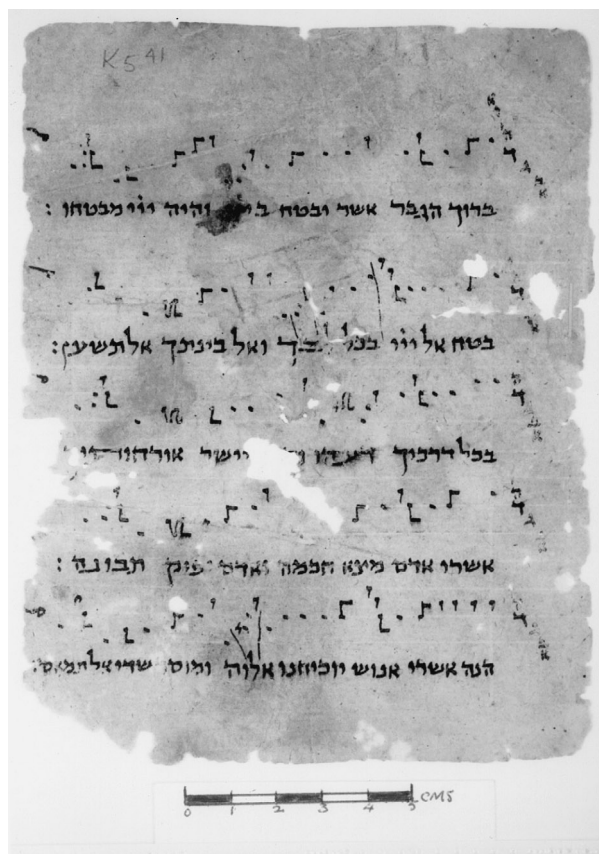


Figure 16.9 T-S K5.41. Music of Obadiah the Proselyte (Cambridge University Library).

text of Ben Sira or Ecclesiasticus from the Genizah is a well-rehearsed story. The first such fragment to come to light, brought to Cambridge from Egypt by Mrs Agnes Lewis and Mrs Margaret Gibson, was enthusiastically identified by Solomon Schechter and acted as a catalyst for his expedition to Cairo and for other identifications elsewhere, particularly in Oxford, London and Paris. Indeed, it is now clear that some such fragments had been retrieved from the Genizah in earlier years and there was considerable competition between various academic institutions, particularly Oxford and Cambridge, in the matter of prior claims and publication. A whole set of fragments, some of them from as early as the tenth century, surfaced in Cambridge during Schechter's initial sorting of his Cairo material and were published by him and Charles Taylor as a new Hebrew edition, followed by a handsome portfolio of facsimiles two years later. If that was insufficient to prove that there had been an original Hebrew in the second century BC, the further work of Segal and Schirmann and Yadin's discovery at Masada of texts that tallied with the oldest Genizah version completed the process of the book's rehabilitation to Hebrew literature of the Second Temple period.

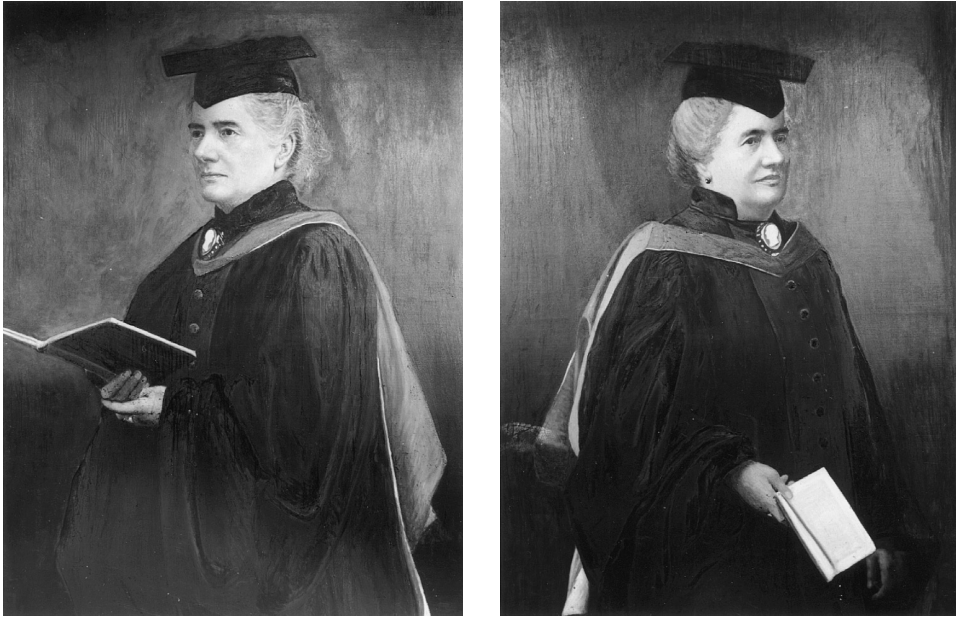


Figure 16.10 Mrs Gibson and Mrs Lewis in academic gowns
(Westminster College, Cambridge).

A less immediate fame was achieved by the *Zadokite Fragment* or *Damascus Document* (= CD). Although Schechter and Louis Ginzberg both recognized the importance of the two Genizah manuscripts of this work and offered some explanations that have generally stood the test of time, no scholar was able to place it in its precise historical and theological context until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls exactly fifty years after the arrival of the Genizah pieces in Cambridge. Once fragments of the same work had been identified among the Qumran treasures, it became possible to trace the origin of CD. And now more material has come to the fore from among the Qumran manuscripts that show the Genizah version to be a reliable copy of the earliest texts; a little less than half of an original tract that constituted an admonition and corpus of Torah interpretation and sectarian rulings; and a composite work belonging to a Qumran legal corpus, at times related to Sadducean and proto-rabbinic traditions. In addition, the Genizah provides us with texts of Tobit in Hebrew and the *Testament of Levi* in Aramaic.

How is one to account for the survival of such material, in some sort of context, from Second Temple Judea to tenth-century Cairo? It is possible that the rabbinic tradition was central through these centuries and was lukewarm about such items, which found greater acceptance among Karaites, fringe groups and non-Jewish communities and made only occasional, haphazard appearances in the more normative synagogues. Alternatively, the rabbinic tradition was less central than it later imagined itself to have been, and historians should be seeking to uncover major Jewish religious trends during the first Christian millennium that manifest

themselves in a variety of ideologies that were, for their part, unenthusiastic about rabbinic developments. Whatever the nature of such alternative 'Judaisms', it would have been natural for talmudic Judaism to have played down their importance and condemned their literature, perhaps not always with success. At periods of literary expansion, such as the one represented by the classic Genizah texts, the drive towards the adoption of written, and therefore authoritative versions (and broader, syncretistic vistas?) may have been one of the factors leading to the temporary acceptance within the talmudic communities of a greater variety of compositions than that sanctioned in some earlier or later contexts. For some historians, the answer is even simpler and is to be found in the fact that texts were hidden away in caves and surfaced from time to time. But would Jewish communities indiscriminately embrace such texts as part of their sacred literature?

Finally, it should be noted that neither Jesus nor Christian liturgy escape mention among the Genizah fragments. The rather uncomplimentary and folkloristic account of the life of Jesus known as *Toledot Yeshu* is well represented and no doubt made the persecuted Jews of the Middle Ages feel a little better, while no wholly satisfactory reason can be offered for the existence in the Cairo Jewish community of parts of a Nestorian Syriac hymn-book. Perhaps these thirteenth- or fourteenth-century texts belonging to a feast of the Virgin Mary were sold as scrap when the Nestorian community faded out of existence in Cairo at that time or shortly afterwards. Such a surprising find should alert us to the fact, if it is not already patently obvious, that there is hardly any area of medieval Near Eastern studies that is not illuminated by the fragments from the Ben-Ezra Synagogue of medieval Fustat.

GLOSSARY

Aggadah (telling): rabbinic religious lore and theology in the talmudic and midrashic corpora, to be contrasted with *halakhah*, which is its legal equivalent.

Genizah (storage): the rabbinic tradition of consigning sacred texts, no longer to be used, to a storage room, cave or underground burial, and a place where that process has taken place.

Geonim (excellencies): the heads of the rabbinic academies in Iraq from the seventh to the twelfth centuries.

Halakhah (procedure): rabbinic religious law, to be contrasted with aggadah, which is its non-legal equivalent.

Kabbalah (tradition) the traditional study and practice of Jewish mysticism.

Karaites and Rabbanites: the two dominant groups of Jews in the early Middle Ages, the former devoted to a more literal interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and rejection of the authority of the Talmud, while the latter adhered to the rabbinic exposition of Jewish religious law and of the Hebrew Bible.

Masorah (transmission): the careful study and transmission of the reading, pointing and chanting of the traditional Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible.

Midrash (interpretation): the rabbinic system of interpreting the Hebrew Bible and any one of a number of collections of material that follow such a system, most of them compiled in the first Christian millennium.

Palimpsest: a manuscript that has been overwritten, with the previous text imperfectly erased.

Raq: skin used by the Muslims for recording texts, especially the Qur'an.

Sadducees: a Jewish sect of the pre-Christian period at odds with the Pharisaic or proto-rabbinic groups and more devoted to the temple, priesthood, ritual purity and more literal interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

Talmud (study): an authoritative corpus of rabbinic instructions and traditions dating from the first few Christian centuries and given a fixed literary form by the eighth century.

Targum (translation): traditional rabbinic translation and interpretation of various parts of the Hebrew Bible in Aramaic.

Torah (learning): the Pentateuch or the whole Hebrew Bible, or the sum total of Jewish religious teaching.

Yeshivah (sitting): a learning session and, by extension, the place where talmudic and halakhic study has taken place for about 2,000 years.

FURTHER READING

Documentation and further details of various aspects of the subject in English may be found in the following books and articles:

Beit-Arié, Malachi, *Hebrew Codicology: Tentative Typology of Technical Practices Employed in Hebrew Dated Medieval Manuscripts*. Rev. edn. Jerusalem, 1981. One of a number of important books by Beit-Arié on various aspects of the study of Hebrew manuscripts.

Blau, Joshua and Reif, Stefan C. (eds), *Genizah Research after Ninety Years: The Case of Judaeo-Arabic*. Cambridge, 1992. A collection of essays that exemplifies the range of subjects written in one of the major Jewish languages represented in the Genizah.

Broshi, M., *The Damascus Document Reconsidered*. Jerusalem, 1992. Useful essays on the current state of various aspects of research into CD by Broshi himself and by E. Qimron and J. Baumgarten, as well as an excellent bibliography by F. García Martínez.

Chiesa, B., *The Emergence of Hebrew Biblical Pointing*. Frankfurt, 1979. A brief monograph tracing the background to the development of the various systems.

Dotan, Aron, 'Masorah' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 16, cols 1401–82. An excellent summary of the history and importance of Masoretic studies.

Goitein, S. D., *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*. 6 vols, including the index volume by Paula Sanders. Berkeley, 1967–93. An outstanding study of Oriental Jewish life in the Middle Ages based on Genizah sources.

Haran, M., 'Bible Scrolls in Eastern and Western Jewish Communities from Qumran to the High Middle Ages', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 56 (1985), 21–62. A detailed and reliable account of how the Hebrew Bible was copied by generations of scribes.

Kahle, Paul, *The Cairo Geniza*. 2nd edn. Oxford, 1959. Outdated in some respects and out of print, but not difficult to obtain, and certainly important for the history of Genizah research.

- Khan, Geoffrey, *Karaite Bible Manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah*. Cambridge, 1990. A thorough and carefully argued examination of some unusual Bible texts.
- Klein, M. L., *Targum Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections*. Cambridge, 1992. A sound, scholarly description of many hundreds of targumic items from the Genizah.
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- Polliack, M., *The Karaite Tradition of Arabic Bible Translation: A Linguistic and Exegetical Study of Karaite Translations of the Pentateuch from the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries C.E.* Leiden, 1997. A close study of important developments, hitherto documented and examined only to a limited degree.
- Price, A. Whigham, *The Ladies of Castlebrae*. Gloucester, 1985. A joint biography of Mrs Agnes Lewis and Mrs Margaret Gibson that is entertaining and informative.
- Reif, Stefan C., *A Guide to the Taylor–Schechter Genizah Collection*. 2nd edn. Cambridge, 1979. A useful booklet briefly introducing the history and contents of the Collection, with some plates. Out of print but available online.
- ‘A Midrashic Anthology from the Genizah’, in *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible*, eds. J. A. Emerton and S. C. Reif. Cambridge, 1982, 79–125. An analysis, edition and translation of an unusual midrashic compilation.
- *Published Material from the Cambridge Genizah Collections: A Bibliography 1896–1980*. Cambridge, 1988. Details of the books and articles published on the Cambridge Genizah, indexed according to classmark, author and title.
- ‘Aspects of Mediaeval Jewish Literacy’, in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick. Cambridge, 1990, 134–55. A survey of the written material used by the Oriental Jewish communities in the early Middle Ages and how it came to be extensive.
- ‘The Cairo Genizah and its Treasures, with Special Reference to Biblical Studies’, in *The Aramaic Bible*, eds D. R. G. Beattie and M. J. McNamara. Sheffield, 1994, 30–50. A summary of the Genizah’s importance for many aspects of biblical study.
- ‘The Discovery of the Ben Sira Fragments’ in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, ed. P. C. Beentjes. Berlin, 1997, 1–22. An account of how the original Hebrew was recovered from the Genizah.
- ‘Aspects of the Jewish Contribution to Biblical Interpretation’, in *Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. J. Barton. Cambridge, 1998. A summary of Jewish study of the Hebrew Bible, comparing and contrasting it with recent ‘Old Testament studies’.
- Richler, Benjamin, *Hebrew Manuscripts: A Treasured Legacy*. Cleveland and Jerusalem, 1990. A popular but informed introduction to the subject, with plates and samples of handwriting, and a chapter on the Cairo Genizah by Robert Brody.
- Sokoloff, M. and Yahalom, J., ‘Christian Palimpsests from the Cairo Geniza’, *Revue d’histoire des Textes* 8 (1978), 109–32. A helpful listing of the relevant items and the studies made of them.
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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE Gnostic GOSPELS



Alastair H. B. Logan

INTRODUCTION

Gnostic and canonical gospels

The problem of 'gnostic gospels' is twofold; it involves both the question what is a gospel and the definition of 'gnostic'. Indeed the first question, what is a gospel, comes into sharp focus precisely when dealing with 'gnostic gospels', particularly those works from the Nag Hammadi Coptic library so entitled (the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,₃ AND XII,₂), the *Gospel of Thomas* (NHC II,₂), the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II,₃), the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHC III,₂ and IV,₂), and the *Gospel of Mary* from the Berlin Coptic Gnostic papyrus (BG 8502,₁)). The latter also contains versions of Nag Hammadi texts significant for defining gnostic 'gospels' (the *Apocryphon of John*: NHC II,₁, III,₁, IV,₁ and BG 8502,₂, and the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*: NHC III,₄ and BG 8502,₃). As we shall see, in several cases the term 'gospel' appears to be a later addition to a more original title, which often relates to 'secret sayings' or a 'secret book' (*apokryphon*) or 'apocalypse'; other texts from Nag Hammadi similarly entitled but without the tag 'gospel', for example the *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I,₂), the *Dialogue of the Saviour* (NHC III,₅), the *Apocalypses of James* (NHC V,₃ and ₄) and the *Book of Thomas* (NHC II,₇), must be kept in mind when discussing gnostic 'gospels'.

The use of the term 'gospel' in some of these texts certainly seems to imply both awareness of and deliberate relation to the canonical gospels. Irenaeus of Lyons, in *Against Heresies*, his attempted refutation particularly of Valentinian gnostics composed around 180, claims that they boast of having more gospels than the four canonical ones themselves. According to him they have a work entitled 'the Gospel of Truth', recently written by them, totally unlike the apostles' gospels, so that not even the name 'gospel' is free of their blasphemy. There can only be, Irenaeus concludes, the four gospels, no more, no less; since God has created everything suitably and in order, the gospel should be well composed and laid out (*Against Heresies* 3.11.9).

Whether this 'Gospel of Truth' is the same as that found in two Nag Hammadi codices or not (see below), Irenaeus's comments are significant, both in that they are among the first incontestable references to the term 'gospel' as designating written documents apparently very similar to our present versions (including John), and in



Figure 17.1 The Nag Hammadi codices, from a photo taken by Jean Doresse in Cairo in 1949. Photo by courtesy of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont, California.

that they show awareness of the term being used by Christian gnostic groups acquainted with the canonical gospels to refer to texts that were very different. Irenaeus's criteria for the nature and number of the gospels (as being transmitted by apostles or pupils of apostles and reflecting the four world zones, spirits and cherubim of Ezekiel and Revelation, and hence the fourfold character of Jesus Christ versus Marcion, Ebionites and Valentinians, etc., who appealed to less or more gospels), despite their tendentious character, are a kind of ancient counterpart of modern arguments that would classify the four canonical gospels as a unique genre.

The first thing to strike one about the gnostic gospels is their very varied character, with none at all comparable to the canonical gospels. The latter, with their distinctive combination of narrative, sayings material, miracle stories and passion narrative, form a complex literary genre that scholarly consensus would now classify as a subtype of narrative analogous to the lives of the Israelite prophets or the Graeco-Roman life/*bios* (Vorster 1992: 1077–9). Thus although some gnostic gospels have narrative elements, these are usually peripheral and subsumed into another literary genre, sayings collection in the case of the *Gospel of Thomas*, or, in the case of the *Gospel of Mary*, revelation dialogue or discourse of the risen Christ with his disciples, the genre most characteristic of gnostic groups and texts (e.g. *Apocryphon of James*, *Apocryphon of John*, *Dialogue of the Saviour* and the *Pistis Sophia* of the Askew Codex: Perkins 1980). Again while some of these have obvious relations to the canonical gospels (the *Gospel of Thomas* with considerable overlap with Q, the hypothesized common source of Matthew and Luke, the *Dialogue of the Saviour* including a collection of Jesus' sayings similar to that in *Thomas*, and developing discourses of the

Saviour similar to those of John's Gospel (Koester 1990: 173–87), the *Gospel of Mary* with some allusions), other texts actually entitled 'gospels' neither bear any significant relation to the canonical gospels, nor are they revelation discourses. Thus the *Gospel of Philip*, despite its echoes of Matthew and John and allusions to the Lord's sayings, is a 'didactic and hortatory treatise' (Wilson 1976: 664) or an example of the genre 'collection' (Turner 1996: 240ff.), the *Gospel of Truth* is a 'meditation or sermon' (Koester 1984: 1474) or a 'hortatory, laudatory address' (Helderman 1988: 4072), and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* an esoteric treatise describing the salvation history of Sethian gnostics.

Conversely, some scholars would see the *Gospel of Thomas*, extant both in Coptic in full and in Greek in fragmentary form in three Oxyrhynchus papyri (POxy 1, 654, 655) as incorporating pre-synoptic gospel tradition. They detect in it a wisdom sayings source overlapping significantly with Q, the hypothetical synoptic sayings source posited by many, particularly American, New Testament scholars (Kloppenborg 1987). Where the two overlap, such scholars have argued that many sayings in *Thomas* appear to be more original or to have developed more original forms than their synoptic versions. Accordingly they argue for the autonomy of this material, seeing it as evidence of one of the earliest stages of gospel formation as reconstructed by them, namely a sayings gospel like Q. Hence, for them, *Thomas* is a document of fundamental importance in reconstructing the history of the gospel tradition (Koester 1990: 75ff.). Conversely other scholars would argue for the essential dependence of *Thomas* on the synoptic tradition (Tuckett 1988), or reject the proposed genre of sayings gospel (Meier 1991: 144). Certainly, as it stands, the text has been subject to redaction, including a gnosticizing interpretation which promotes the salvation of the individual by a self-knowledge that implies hidden mysteries (Arnal 1995: 478ff., cf. sayings 21–2). And as regards the second question noted at the outset, the definition of 'gnostic', it is striking that the earliest most probable allusion to the *Gospel of Thomas*, a version of saying 4, occurs in the *Refutation of All Heresies* of Pseudo-Hippolytus of Rome, written before 222 CE, which speaks of its use by the Naassene sect, who called themselves 'gnostics'.¹

Thus the *Gospel of Thomas* emerges as a pivotal text both as regards the question of the definition and development of the genre 'gospel' and of the canonical gospels in particular, and as regards the definition of 'gnostic'. And its existence within a collection of texts, some of which are dubbed 'gospels', and many of which seem to reflect the views of groups whom Irenaeus of Lyons, author of the earliest surviving heresiological work, entitled 'Detection and overthrow of the falsely so-called *gnosis* (knowledge)', identifies as 'gnostics' and Valentinians, is evidently no accident. Certainly one scholar has attempted to deny that the Nag Hammadi Coptic texts are the library or libraries of the extremely varied gnostic sects identified by the fathers, largely on the basis of a lack of correlation. Such sects, he argues, are largely inventions of the fathers, and the texts are united only by an ascetic tendency, being intended for individual meditation (Wisse 1971). Moreover, the whole concept of 'gnosticism' as a homogeneous phenomenon with certain characteristics (dualism, anti-cosmicism, etc.) has been attacked (Williams 1996). Indeed, a widespread view today, appealing to evidence from the covers, is that the Nag Hammadi texts were not the library of a gnostic sect or sects but were collected and copied by monks in

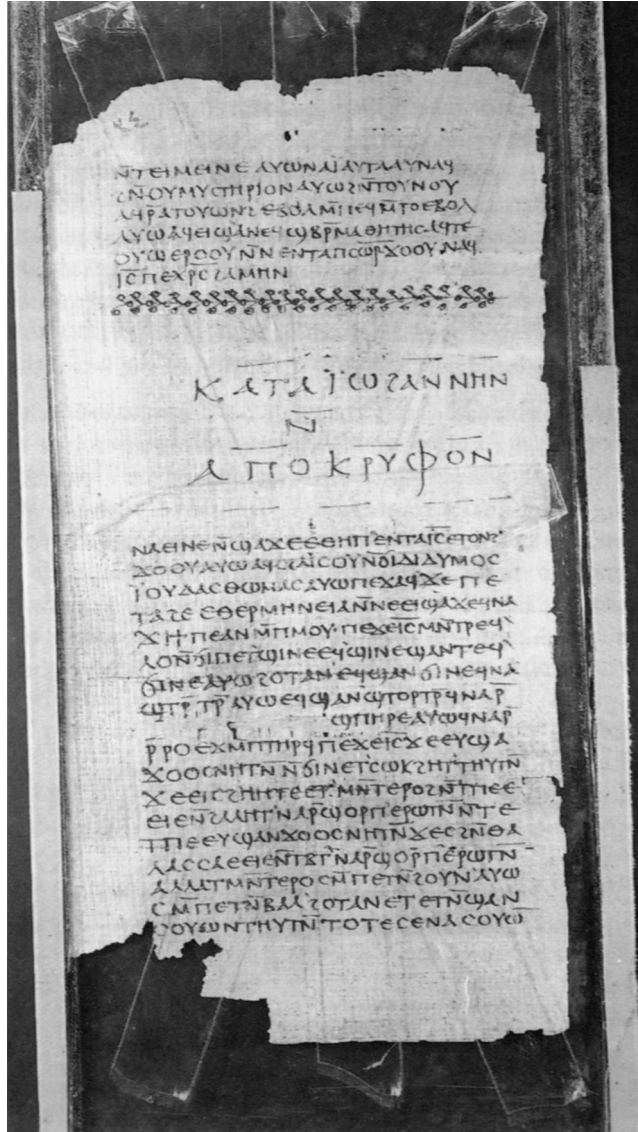


Figure 17.2 The end of the *Apocryphon of John*. Photo by courtesy of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont, California.

that area, precisely where Pachomius, the pioneer of cenobitic monasticism, founded his first monastery (Wisse 1978).

But were they originally composed by monks, let alone collected or copied by them? The Nag Hammadi codices, despite their varieties of genre and content, including Christian and pagan texts, do not seem to suggest a haphazard process of monastic collection and copying, and could make sense as the collection of a particular group

or groups. I have recently argued that they are indeed the collection of a Christian cult group who called themselves 'gnostics', centring on their 'classic' myth and cult of initiation as reflected in their fundamental text, the *Apocryphon of John* (Logan 1996; 1997).

This group (including Irenaeus' 'Barbelognostics' and 'Ophites', the Naassenes of Pseudo-Hippolytus, the Christian 'heretics' attending Plotinus' lectures in Rome in the 260s, the gnostics, Sethians and Archontics of Epiphanius of Salamis, and the Sethians or 'immoveable race' of many Nag Hammadi tractates) was united in their understanding and experience of fall and restoration. This was seen in terms of the myth of a fallen heavenly Sophia figure, and their rebirth as Christs in baptism and chrism, after the pattern of the primal anointing of the Son, the third person of the gnostic triad of Father, Mother and Son. As is said of the Naassenes, Sethians and Archontics, such groups collected all manner of relevant material to illustrate and confirm their myth and doctrine.²

As regards the coherence of individual codexes, it has recently been argued that they themselves demonstrate a certain logic in their ordering (Williams 1996: 235ff.), something that might cast light on those texts entitled 'gospels'. Analysis of the manuscripts, scribal hands, and so on, has suggested a collection of subcollections from different locations. It is surely significant that the *Apocryphon of John* comes first in three codexes from distinct groupings in terms of scribal hand and codex construction, and in a recurrent pattern in which it is followed by the same few texts, of which three are entitled 'gospel' (*Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of Philip*).³ Now the first two of several rationales for composition suggested by Williams are a 'history of revelation' arrangement and an imitation of the order of Christian scripture. The *Apocryphon*, setting out as it does the primordial revelation and history of salvation, reinterpreting the early chapters of Genesis, could be considered the gnostic equivalent of the Old Testament, the 'scripture' of the early Christians. This is then followed by further ancient testimony (e.g. *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Eugnostos*: NHC III and IV) and Christ's revelation to his disciples (*Sophia of Jesus Christ*, *Dialogue of the Saviour*: BG and NHC III), or Gnostic equivalents of the New Testament (gospels, letters-cum-treatises, apocalypse, etc.), dealing with salvation (the Saviour's coming and his sayings, the battle with opposing powers over the soul, etc.) and eschatology (resurrection of the flesh, apocalypses, judgment; i.e. the remaining tractates of NHC II).

This evidence of order and pattern, suggesting an alternative set of 'scriptures' to the mainstream one, existing in at least four distinct collections, far from supporting the Pachomian monks' hypothesis, would seem to imply the activity of a Christian gnostic group or groups, composing, copying, assembling collections of relevant sacred writings. For the texts do seem to have been assembled with a certain logic,⁴ with some coherence supplied by the order: the opening text as primal or decisive revelation ('scripture') supplies the criterion by which to interpret the rest. Thus the largely Valentinian treatises of codex I (including the *Gospel of Truth*), clearly deliberately ordered, are introduced by the apparently non-Valentinian *Apocryphon of James* as a kind of 'gospel', a revelation dialogue of the Saviour with James and Peter, who then experience an ecstatic ascent with apocalyptic features.⁵ The Thomas literature (*Gospel* and *Book of Thomas*), which is generally thought not characteristically gnostic

but to derive from the ascetic Syrian Thomas tradition, and which it has been argued was known to and influenced Valentinus and his school (Layton 1987: 359ff.), I would suggest fitted very well into the gnostics' ascetic tendency and overriding concern for the nature and destiny of the soul, as the use of *Thomas* by the Naassene branch demonstrates. The presence of other very varied material in the Nag Hammadi library can be seen in the same light.

GNOSTIC GOSPELS: AN OVERVIEW

Having considered the question of the definition of 'gospel' and looked at the 'gnostic' texts entitled 'gospel' in their relation to the canonical gospels and in their context, the libraries of gnostic cult groups, we now need to consider the gnostic gospels in more detail. As already indicated, the *Gospel of Thomas* would seem to be a pivotal work, both as regards the development of the synoptic gospel tradition, but also with regard to the development of gnostic movements, both the gnostics and the Valentinians. Therefore, I shall first deal with it and then more briefly with the other gnostic gospels.

Gospel of Thomas

As indicated, the *Gospel of Thomas* is a collection of sayings of Jesus of various sorts, including prophecies, proverbs and parables, usually in dialogue with his disciples individually or as a group, which betrays no overall pattern, but often links sayings by catchword. Significantly, whereas the Coptic has the past tense (or 'historic present'), the Greek of the fragments has the present ('Jesus says'). The title 'gospel' seems a later addition, with the more appropriate designation contained in the opening words: 'These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymus Judas Thomas wrote down.'⁶ However, both POxy 654 and the Naassenes confirm the overall theme of the work and the order of the opening sayings (especially 2–5), while the latter clearly attest the attribution of the title 'gospel' to the work by the third century.⁷ Moreover, it evidently sums up the Naassene esoteric teaching, according to Pseudo-Hippolytus. And this issue of the opening words and designation raises the question of the genre of the *Gospel of Thomas*. I have already spoken of its general designation by a number of scholars as a sayings collection, or sayings gospel, like Q, but also of the criticism and rejection of such a genre. Can we be more precise?

In a landmark essay, James Robinson claimed to identify the genre of *Thomas* as that of *logoi sophon*, 'words of the wise' (Robinson 1971), pointing not only to Jewish examples, such as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom of Solomon, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and *Pirke Abot*; and gnostic examples, such as the *Apocalypse of Adam* but also to pagan versions and Christian instances such as Q. Robinson also went on to point out the essentially fluid, dynamic character exhibited by genres and attempted to trace the history of the sayings collection genre (*Gattungsgeschichte*) from its roots in Jewish wisdom literature via Q to its later bifurcation, one branch leading to the biographical narrative gospels, Matthew and Luke, the other to gnostic revelation dialogues such as the *Book of Thomas*. The tendency of the genre to associate sayings

with a sage meant that 'it could easily be swept into the christological development moving from personified Wisdom to the gnostic redeemer' (Robinson 1971: 105).

The presence of wisdom sayings among Jesus' words (as illustrated by Q) must undoubtedly have led to their organization into the *Gattung* 'logoi sophon', and the tendency of the *Gattung* was co-ordinated with Q's association of Jesus with heavenly Wisdom. *Thomas* suggests the gnosticizing distortion that readily took place in this *Gattung*, as the target of such a trajectory, of which the process of embedding Q into the Markan outline by Matthew and Luke in the alternative genre 'gospel' represented an orthodox criticism and counter. But this meant that the genre was short-lived in Christianity. On the one hand, the oral tradition of Jesus' sayings, the essential context of the genre, died out and was replaced among the 'orthodox' by the canonical gospels, while, on the other, gnostics came to prefer the genre of dialogues of the risen Christ with his disciples as a more flexible form for their speculations.

Other scholars have enthusiastically taken up and developed this position. Helmut Koester, in particular, has accepted the genre *logoi sophon*, but preferred to characterize Q and *Thomas* as 'wisdom gospels', in that not only are they sapiential, but they actually represent a form of kerygma independent of the cross and resurrection form of the canonical gospels. In wisdom gospels what is authoritative is the presence of the teacher ('Jesus, the Living One') in his word; what crystallized the sayings into a 'gospel' was 'the view that the kingdom is uniquely present in Jesus' eschatological preaching and that eternal wisdom about man's true self is disclosed in his words' (Koester 1971: 186).

Koester argues from the character of the sayings as of Jesus, and the absence of features typical of post-resurrection secret revelations, that 'Jesus, the Living One' is the earthly Jesus, and that the sayings themselves as our only sure guides require form-critical analysis of their distinct categories. Such an analysis reveals types and forms similar to those used by Jesus in his proclamation. Most typical are parables, revelatory 'I' sayings, wisdom sayings and rules for the community. Least typical are prophetic and apocalyptic sayings, especially apocalyptic Son of Man sayings, which are lacking in *Thomas*. Thus for Koester the basis of *Thomas* is a sayings collection more primitive than the canonical gospels, of which Q was a secondary version, into which the apocalyptic Son of Man eschatology had been introduced to check the gnosticizing tendencies of the former. The suggestion that Paul's opponents in Corinth had such a wisdom theology (Paul quotes a saying found in *Thomas*⁸) confirms the antiquity of such a sayings collection (Koester 1971: 186f.).

More recently John Kloppenborg in his work on Q has analysed in detail the range of ancient sayings collections, criticizing Robinson for largely limiting his discussion of the genre to Jewish examples. Thus he points to Hellenistic sayings collections, the *gnomologium* and the *chreia*,⁹ confirming the fluidity and dynamism of the genre, suggesting in relation to the former category the instructional character of *Thomas* and its esoteric hermeneutic of investigation resulting in salvation, with 'the Living Jesus' as a kind of divine figure akin to Sophia, according to some of the sayings (Kloppenborg 1987: 289f., 301, 305). He also points to the educational character of *chreiae* and their looseness of structure, with self-contained units, often with clusters of *gnomai*, but no consistent theme, unlike the instruction or *gnomologium* and the fluidity of the boundary between them and biography (311, 315f.).

Now, as already noted, Koester's definition of 'gospel' involving sapiential sayings collections has been criticized, on the grounds that 'gospel' must be defined in terms of the four canonical gospels, that is, narratives 'of the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth, necessarily culminating in his death and resurrection' (Meier 1991: 143), but the understanding of *Thomas* as belonging to the well-attested genre of *logoi sophon*, as illuminated by the work of Kloppenborg and others, seems generally accepted. But the question still remains where on the trajectory of that genre *Thomas* is to be situated. More light may be cast on this by the following discussion of the relation between *Thomas* and the canonical gospels, but in this section on genre, some consideration of why it might have been composed and for whom, as well as its attraction for gnostics (and Manichees) might be in order. However ancient and primitive some of its contents may be, it was collected (or at least redacted) as an esoteric document, the words of 'Jesus, the Living One', presented as a divine Wisdom figure. The Greek fragments preserve the present tense, reinforcing the authoritative, timeless character of the statements of a Jesus who, if not presented as the usual post-resurrection Lord of the gnostic dialogues, is nevertheless no mere earthly figure. That authoritative status is further guaranteed by the claim that Judas Thomas was the recipient and recorder, as special confidant of Jesus (see saying 13), a feature characteristic of a later stage in the formation of the gospel tradition when the need for authentication became ever more pressing (Dunderberg 1998b: 80ff.). Further, despite the oral background of the sayings, they are presented in written form, in Greek and reflecting contemporary literary categories, Jewish and pagan. And if the evidence suggests a fluidity of order, as we have seen, it also suggests fixity in the vital opening thematic statements.

Thus *Thomas* might be more readily situated in the context of late first- and early second-century interest in collecting the sayings of Jesus as authoritative. Robinson and Koester both allude to sections of the *Didache* and *1 Clement* as evidence for such collections, and indeed the evidence of the former is instructive. As with *Thomas*, the work derives from a Syrian milieu, is presented as instructional and maintains the 'authorial fiction' of apostolic transmission, in this case the teaching of the Lord via the apostles to the heathen. Then follows a collection of Jesus' sayings involving prophetic sayings, parenesis and community rules, mainly from the Sermon on the Mount, combining Matthew and Luke (or Q?: *Did.* 1.3–5), with later citation of sapiential material.¹⁰ There is also the evidence of Papias about the value of apostolic preservation of the sayings of Jesus. Further the Naassene and gnostic use of *Thomas* might support the hypothesis of its gnostic character from the start. In this light, Koester's attempt to understand *Thomas* as the best example of a primitive 'wisdom gospel', of which the hypothetical Q is the only other example, seems an inadequate basis for establishing such a genre, while Robinson's suggestion of the inevitability of – or even inbuilt tendency towards – a gnosticizing development of the sapiential sayings collection genre seems equally debatable. Thus it has been argued that *Thomas* contains many secondary compositions artificially put together, and that it is more than a mere collection of sayings, with evidence of dialogue structure and larger complexes of sayings, and thus more like the gnostic dialogues (Dehandschutter 1982, 1992).

This brings us to consider the question of *Thomas*'s relation to the canonical gospels,

and the synoptics in particular. What is so striking about the text is not only the large number of sayings that are very similar to the synoptics',¹¹ but also those that are so different. The former, moreover, seem to divide into those that are versions of synoptic sayings at a pre-synoptic (e.g. sayings 8–10, 21, 31, 44, 47, 57, 63, 68, 76, 89, 91, 95) or post-synoptic (e.g. sayings 32, 39, 45, 104) stage, and those that clearly modify the synoptic versions, often in a gnosticizing way (e.g. sayings 2–5, 11, 12–14, 16, 19, 22–5, 27, 46). Now one or two of those quite independent of the synoptic tradition may preserve authentic sayings of Jesus (e.g. saying 82), but many others again seem to reflect a more gnosticizing strain (e.g. sayings 7, 11, 15, 18, 23, 28–30, 37, 42, 49–52, 56, 59–60, 62, 67, 70, 75, 77, 80, 83–5, 87–8, 106, 108, 110–112, 114).

Earlier scholarship tended to assume that *Thomas* was dependent on the synoptics,¹² but the only detailed attempt to demonstrate that by appeal to the Coptic versions of the New Testament (Schrage 1964) has been judged by many critics as flawed, particularly as regards its methodology. The present text of *Thomas* clearly represents a later stage of what was a fluid tradition, with transpositions, additions and likely scribal assimilations to the Coptic New Testament versions. And, as already indicated, a considerable body of scholars nowadays seems more convinced by the case for the independence of *Thomas*, accounting for the sayings that betray awareness of the synoptic tradition as later insertions and modifications. Their arguments for the autonomy of the *Thomas* material seem to consist, first and primarily, of an appeal to the lack of any consistent pattern of borrowing by *Thomas* from the synoptics. Second, they appeal to *Thomas*'s apparent lack of links with synoptic redactional material, and third they appeal to the general lack of characteristic synoptic features such as a narrative structure, or the kerygma of cross and resurrection, or apocalyptic features and titles. Conversely they stress the sapiential colouring of *Thomas* and the many instances where *Thomas*'s version of a saying or parable is demonstrably earlier and more original than the synoptic one. But, as Tuckett has observed, defenders of *Thomas*'s ultimate dependence on the synoptic tradition continue to appear, among whom he is a notable figure.

On the consistency issue Tuckett has suggested that such a criterion has been drawn up too narrowly, implying the kind of dependence shown by Matthew and Luke on Mark, or a 'scissors-and-paste' approach involving direct use of the actual gospel texts. It may be that the author/redactor of *Thomas* was using a harmonized version of the gospels (like Tatian, another Syrian). Tuckett has concentrated on sayings that he argues depend on redactional elements in all three synoptics, and insisted that the number of cases of synoptic dependence on the part of redactor(s) of *Thomas* is too great to be accounted for by later casual assimilation. But as he himself admits, there is a danger of stalemate on the whole issue of the relation between *Thomas* and the synoptics, with both sides becoming polarized and no really new lines of approach or arguments being advanced (Tuckett 1988: 132). More recent scholarship on *Thomas* has perhaps opened up new lines of approach to the issue. Thus one scholar has argued for the likelihood of an *indirect* use, appealing to an oral tradition and interpretation, building not on the supposed original oral traditions underlying *Thomas*, but on the written synoptic tradition (a kind of 'secondary orality': Uro 1998a). However, as Tuckett also admits, the question may ultimately be insoluble given the present state of the evidence (1988: 157).

More recently attention has turned to the relation, if any, between *Thomas* and the Fourth Gospel. Although *Thomas* appears at first sight closer to the synoptics not only in terms of verbal parallels, but also in terms of literary forms, there are enough similarities, particularly in terms of the symbolic world they both inhabit and the concern both have with the divine origin of Jesus and the believer, with the promise of immortality and a kind of 'realized eschatology', and with criticism of 'the Jews', to have given rise to two main explanations of their relationship. The first, which was developed by Raymond Brown in the early 1960s, was that *Thomas* was dependent on John (Brown 1963: 155–77). Brown focused on the close parallels as alone significant and noted their accumulation in two Johannine passages (John 7:37–8:59; 13–17). From their dispersal in these passages and the fact that the passages are composite, Brown deduced that *Thomas* must have been dependent on John. However, since there are no direct quotations, Brown suggested that the traces of Johannine influence could be attributed to the second source of *Thomas*, for him a gnostic document exhibiting tendentious modifications of synoptic sayings, whose author may have known the Fourth Gospel (Brown 1963: 177). Others have followed Brown's approach, although it has been criticized for its methodology and too ready assumption that *Thomas* is a gnostic document (Dunderberg 1998a: 36).

The second main theory regarding the relationship is that both share a common sayings tradition, whether it be found within the Johannine community, with *Thomas* as a pre-Johannine form (Davies 1983: 107–16), or as distinctively Palestinian (Quispel 1991: 137–55). Koester too sees *Thomas* as influencing the development of the distinctive Johannine Gospel tradition, with its developed discourses. He argues that *Thomas* and the *Dialogue of the Saviour* can help us trace the tradition history of those discourses in that, while the former demonstrates the first stage of transition from sayings collection to dialogue, the latter shows the beginnings of larger compositions. Indeed, he even argues on the basis of John 8: 12–59 for a tension between the pre-Johannine traditions of *Thomas* and the Johannine, whereby the former reflect a gnostic view of salvation which the Johannine author attempted to refute (Koester 1980: 253; 1990: 263, etc.).

However, perhaps none of these hypotheses is entirely convincing; what is required is careful, detailed analysis of the two texts as well as their contexts to establish whether there is any real evidence of dependence in either direction. Here the recent studies of Dunderberg (1998a, 1998b) and Marjanen (1998) help illuminate the contexts of *Thomas* and the Fourth Gospel and the question of the gnostic character of the former. Thus Dunderberg notes the methodological problems raised by the relationship question: that there is no way of knowing which antedates the other; that the differences in genre can equally allow *Thomas*'s use of John and vice versa, as also their entire independence, and that no agreement has been reached regarding the redaction history of each. Thus an essentially literary approach needs to be completed by a broader analysis of the conceptual relationship of both.

Dunderberg focuses his analysis on the I-sayings in *Thomas* as forming a relatively cohesive group expressing Jesus' self-definition and as having significant Johannine parallels in some cases. He concludes that there are no certain indicators of any literary dependence, nor did the two communities seem to have had any contact. On the other hand, a number of conceptual affinities suggest a similar context in

early Christianity for both, but in the period from 70 CE to the turn of the first century rather than earlier (1998a: 63f.). His following study of *Thomas* and the Beloved Disciple focuses on the questions that arise from the similarities between the two figures. These include the importance of 'authorial fiction' in both, the way both are intended to be read, the way the claims for authorship in both are related to other early Christian writings claimed to be the work of disciples of Jesus, and the contexts of such claims (1998b: 67).

In his conclusions Dunderberg is led to repeat his earlier finding that there is no clear literary relation between the two texts, and that one cannot assume that similarities between the two figures can best be explained by assuming that *Thomas* was dependent on John (1998b: 71). Further, neither claim, that Thomas was the model for the Beloved Disciple or that the two were identical, seems justified: both characters are represented entirely differently, apart from their alleged close relationship with Jesus and the claims of authorship connected with them. Finally, Dunderberg deals with the phenomenon of 'authorial fiction' so prominent in the two texts, as in a wide variety of contemporary literary genres. The most obvious function of such a fiction is authentication, and the use of Jesus' disciples as figures of authentication is found in various early Christian writings, in increasingly concrete forms. Thus 'authorial fiction' can help to locate writings such as John and *Thomas* within early Christianity. On this basis, the latter represents a less concrete stage than the former. But both find their best context within the broad tendency of claiming apostolic authority, attested particularly in the later generations of early Christianity. This for Dunderberg supports the view that neither John nor *Thomas*, at least in their extant forms, can be dated very early in the first century CE (1998b: 82ff.).

Finally, we might note the way Marjanen treats the claim that *Thomas* is a gnostic document and Uro that it is encratite. The former, after dealing with the debate about the character of *Thomas* and the still unresolved question of the definition of gnosticism, again suggests a new perspective: how *Thomas* views the world, as compared to the Wisdom of Solomon, the Gospel of John, the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Apocryphon of John* (1998: 107ff.). He concludes that, unlike the Wisdom of Solomon, *Thomas* sees the world as a worthless and even threatening entity, while not considering it an error, the work of a perishable demiurge, as do the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Apocryphon of John*. Overall its view of the cosmos comes closest to that of John, while not going so far as to posit his ruler of this world. *Thomas's* and John's attitude to the world is gnostic if they are the touchstone, but not, if the *Gospel of Philip* and *Apocryphon of John* are.

Uro sets his discussion of the encratite character of *Thomas*, stressed by many scholars and Quispel in particular, but denied by others, in the context of the recent more developed understanding of asceticism in the ancient world. He focuses on sexual asceticism in *Thomas* and its three main themes: anti-familial sayings, sayings on 'becoming one' and sayings about the 'solitary'. He is led to conclude that the ambiguity in *Thomas* over a number of issues, not just marriage versus celibacy, may reflect a development towards a more encratite communal situation (1998b: 162).

Thus the various strands of interpretation can be seen to converge on certain tentative conclusions about *Thomas*, its origins, milieu, character and relation to the New Testament gospels. It would seem best to see it as a sayings collection combining

early, pre-synoptic, material with synoptic and later, from a similar period and milieu and sharing similar concepts with John, developing in a more gnostic and encratite direction, and intended by its 'authorial fiction' to be considered authoritative. No wonder it proved so attractive to the Naassenes and the compilers of the Nag Hammadi library.

Gospel of Mary

The *Gospel of Mary* is the first of the three gnostic documents in Sahidic found in the Berlin Gnostic papyrus, known since 1896 but not published until 1955 (Till 1955: Till and Schenke 1972). A Greek fragment from Oxyrhynchus with considerable textual variants was found in the Rylands Collection (P. Ryl. 463: Roberts 1938: 18–23). The Coptic MS has been dated to the early fifth century and the Greek fragment to the early third century. Unfortunately pages 1–6 and 11–14 of the Coptic text are missing and the Greek fragment, which is quite lacunous, only covers parts of pages 17–19. The Coptic text, as with the other works in the codex, has the title at the end, and there is space for a title at the end of the Greek fragment, but it is not clear whether there was a title at the beginning of the Coptic, as there is in the case of the third work, the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*.

Whether the title 'gospel' is original or not, the work is clearly a composite of two parts, probably dating from the late second century. The [first part](#) consists of a typical gnostic revelation discourse of the risen Lord to his disciples, in which Mary (Magdalene, as in other gnostic texts) plays a minor role, encouraging the downcast disciples by recalling the Saviour's grace and their elect status. The missing opening section probably dealt with cosmology, as is suggested by the discussion of the various natures and their roots in the surviving text. In the [second part](#), in response to Peter's request that she recount the words of the Saviour that she alone knows, Mary describes a vision of the Lord and the experience of the ascending soul as it is interrogated by hostile powers. Levi defends Mary from the disciples' criticism, which may reflect mainstream Christian objections, as fully worthy and loved by the Saviour even more than them.¹³ They then go forth to preach the gospel.

There are clear allusions to the canonical gospels, clustered around the transition (Wilson 1957: 236–43), and their influence on the frame story is evident. Furthermore, there are several references to 'the gospel' as meaning the message the disciples have to proclaim, and the usage 'gospel of the kingdom' suggests a fairly fixed formula reminiscent of Matthew (Koester 1990: 22). This raises the question of the significance of the work's title. Mary Magdalene was evidently a significant figure for gnostic groups. As already noted, she plays a central role in several texts, and according to the Naassene gnostics was their source as recipient of the voluminous secret revelations of James, the Lord's brother.¹⁴ Applying Williams's 'history of revelation' hypothesis to the Berlin Gnostic codex, one could classify the *Gospel of Mary* as a primal revelation dealing with the origins and destiny of the various natures, particularly the soul. That Mary should feature so prominently perhaps suggests that the key to the selection process of BG lies in its editor's interest in the role of female figures in gnostic myth and history. Thus the *Apocryphon of John* with its fully developed gnostic myth of Sophia and fuller details of the fates of

various souls comes next, followed by the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* with its concern with Sophia as the cause of the visible world, described in the Saviour's final response—to Mary! The final work, *The Act of Peter*, which seems more encratite than gnostic, may have been included because of its concern with the fate of its virgin heroine and capacity for gnostic allegorization.

Gospel of Philip

The *Gospel of Philip* is the third text in codex II from Nag Hammadi, but it is not the same as the libertine gnostic work under that title from which Epiphanius quotes (*Panarion* 26.13.2–3). The Coptic MS of the mid-fourth century probably goes back to a Greek original of the second or third century, perhaps from Antioch or its neighbourhood, as is suggested by certain details such as the use of Syriac words. As noted above, it has been variously described, most recently as an example of the genre 'collection' (Turner 1996: 240ff.). It is clearly not a gospel either in the sense of the canonical gospels, or in the sense of a sayings collection like *Thomas* (although it quotes some sayings of Jesus, both from the canonical gospels and from *Thomas*); or even in the sense of a gnostic 'gospel', a revelation dialogue like the *Gospel of Mary*. Nor does it proclaim a message of salvation, as in Paul's sense of the term or that of the *Gospel of Truth*. The title only occurs in the scribal colophon at the end and may be secondary. Philip may have been chosen as the only disciple mentioned by name (II 73.8–15), but the choice may be no accident since he is a privileged recipient of the Lord's revelation according to the *Pistis Sophia*, and is prominent in the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*.¹⁵ The title 'gospel' would appear to have been based on knowledge of the canonical gospels,¹⁶ perhaps another attempt at authentication by 'authorial fiction'.

If Turner's proposed classification is correct, then one need not seek a coherent structure in the work, and one is spared the problem of identifying it as a whole with any particular gnostic sect. Most commentators would classify it as Valentinian on the basis of the striking similarities in concepts and terminology, particularly as regards sacraments. But Turner's analysis suggests a collection of sources of varying origin. Thus she identifies (1) a source linked to the early Thomas tradition; (2) an early or conservative Valentinian tradition (including a section very similar to the *Gospel of Truth*); and (3) passages very different from the first two involving 'Sethian' material about an ignorant creator and a fallen Sophia (1996: 234f.). Turner usefully compares it with the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, but the latter is limited to Valentinian sources and reveals Clement's main motive of disagreement and refutation. She rightly stresses the positive attitude of the collector of *Philip* for whom each excerpt is of value. And here reference to the main themes of true God/inferior creator and procreating/creating coupled with her allusion to the anti-sacramental approach shared by the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Gospel of Truth* is instructive. The former does indeed centre on the key theme of gnostic sacramental rebirth and its proper understanding. If the Nag Hammadi texts do, as I have argued, represent libraries of the gnostic cult movement based on their Christ-centred myth and rite of initiation and are widely attested by the fathers and beyond (Celsus, Plotinus, Porphyry), then the *Gospel of Philip* would fit well into this scenario. It can be seen as another testimony

to the gnostic understanding of sacraments, particularly initiation, collected by a member of the cult from relevant evidence, Valentinian in particular. Thus it may be no accident that the texts involving Philip do tend to come from groups associated with this gnostic movement.¹⁷ As the gnostic 'spiritual gospel' equivalent to John, the *Gospel of Philip* comes appropriately after the gnostic Genesis (the *Apocryphon of John*) and the gnostic sayings gospel (*Thomas*).

Gospel of Truth

The *Gospel of Truth* is the third of five writings in the Subachmimic dialect of Coptic from codex I from Nag Hammadi, and the text also occurs in Sahidic in rather different but very fragmentary form as the second treatise in codex XII. The general consensus is that it was translated from a Greek original. Whether it is identical with the 'Gospel of Truth' mentioned by Irenaeus as recently composed by Valentinians and entirely unlike the canonical gospels is debated. Certainly it is unlike the latter, just as it is unlike any of the gnostic gospels discussed so far. It is a homily or meditation on the gospel, with the term 'gospel' occurring in the incipit and twice more in the text, always in the sense of the message of salvation (Koester 1990: 22f.). It has been understood as a confirmation homily, although it may be a purely literary text.

Some scholars have even suggested that it was written by Valentinus himself, perhaps in Rome, alluding to its sophisticated rhetorical style and certain echoes of his fragments (van Unnik 1955; Standaert 1976). However, there are enough significant differences between its themes and those found within the body of Valentinian literature to make some reject a Valentinian provenance. Thus it begins with God as monad, has very little to say about the fall in the Godhead, and almost none of the characteristic Valentinian speculation about the three anthropological categories, pneumatic, psychic and hylic. The discrepancies might be due to the work reflecting the earlier views of Valentinus, or being a much later product of Valentinian *rapprochement* with Catholic Christianity. However, the Nag Hammadi monograph series editors plausibly explain them by suggesting that the *Gospel of Truth* should be considered an exoteric work, directed, like the Valentinian Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*, to the general membership of the church in Rome or Alexandria. This would explain its – typically allusive – use of various New Testament themes and its apparent knowledge of most of the contemporary Church's New Testament canon, including the synoptics and John, most of the Pauline letters, Hebrews and Revelation (Attridge 1985: 76–81).

Although van Unnik's bold claim that the *Gospel of Truth* thereby attests an authoritative collection at Rome around 140–50 CE virtually identical with our New Testament has been criticized (von Campenhausen 1972: 140f.), the researches of Wilson and Tuckett further illuminate the nature and extent of the author's knowledge. Thus Tuckett would see the finished Gospel of Matthew as the sole source of the synoptic material in the *Gospel of Truth*, thereby adding an argument for its early date (1986: 57–68). Acknowledgment of the authority of John and of Paul would not be surprising for a Valentinian (including Valentinus): Valentinians seem among the first to regard John as scripture, and Pauline themes of grace and election have

been argued to underpin their theology. The work's rich allusive style and concern with salvation involving anointing and naming make its inclusion in a library of the gnostic cult perfectly understandable.

Gospel of the Egyptians

This text appears at first sight to have even less claim to the title 'gospel' than the others. It is, according to its editors and translators, 'an esoteric tractate representing mythological gnosticism . . . a work in which Sethian gnostics portrayed their salvation history' (Robinson 1977: 195). Indeed, the formal title is 'The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit', and the title 'Gospel of the Egyptians' occurs at the beginning of the colophon which ends with that formal title.¹⁸ Although there are only a few New Testament echoes, the editors argue for the appropriateness of the title 'gospel' from the way that the work presents the life of Seth, from his prehistory to his saving work in the world, in a manner analogous to the canonical gospels' presentation of the life of Jesus. The author of the colophon has completed the Christianization of a non- or only marginally Christian work by explaining it as a gospel on the basis of the identification of Seth with Jesus. The reference to the Egyptians might be because of a transformation of Egyptian Seth into biblical Seth (Böhlig and Wisse 1975: 18–22).

I would only disagree with the description of the work as marginally Christian and Christianized on the basis of my interpretation of the Sethians as Christian gnostics (Logan 1996), with their distinct myth and ritual of initiation as reflected – if allusively – in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. I wholeheartedly endorse their point that all the Nag Hammadi texts entitled 'gospel' are only understandable on the basis of a real gnostic-cosmic view, or in other words a gnostic myth (Böhlig and Wisse 1975: 22). The same could be said of the *Gospel of Mary*.

CONCLUSION

This survey of the gnostic texts entitled 'gospel' and their relation to the canonical gospels has suggested, first, that all of them, apart from the earlier strata of *Thomas*, betray some awareness of the canonical gospels and a desire to appropriate their title and authority for their own purposes. Second, despite their varied provenance and genres, they can be classed as 'gospel' in the original sense of message of salvation interpreted in a typically gnostic way to imply a universal myth of restoration. This would help to explain their presence and status within the Nag Hammadi and Berlin codices as library collections of the gnostic cult.

NOTES

- ¹ *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 5.7.20. The context seems to allude to sayings 2–4, and 5.8.32 echoes saying 11. On the self-designation cf. 5.6.4. On authorship and date see Brent 1995.
- ² Cf. Ps.-Hipp. *Refutatio* 5.9.7: Epiph. *Panarion* 39.5.1; 40.2.1f.
- ³ BG would seem to break the pattern, with a 'gospel' first, but it does include a general revelation, which the *Apocryphon of John* and *Sophia of Jesus Christ* then expand.

- 4 See Williams 1996: 249, on a deliberate scribal procedure in codex I, and 253–60 on the order of the other codices. The scribal note (NHC VI 65,8–14) implies a particular rationale in the selection of Hermetic treatises.
- 5 In codex V, *Eugnostos* acts as the primal revelation or ancient testimony about the heavenly world, followed by a series of apocalypses involving apostolic ascents. See Williams 1996: 256f.
- 6 NHC II 32.10–12, preserved in Greek in POxy 654.
- 7 Cf. *Ref.* 5.7.20, with the allusions to saying 2 (seeking) and 3 (heaven within man), as well as 4.
- 8 Cf. 1 Cor. 2:9 and *Gospel of Thomas* 17.
- 9 The *gnome* is essentially a saying, the *chreia* a story.
- 10 See the recurring refrain ‘my child. . .’ in 3.1,3–6; 4.1; 5.2.
- 11 Koester 1990: 87 speaks of 79 sayings with synoptic gospel parallels.
- 12 See e.g. Haenchen 1961: 147–78, 306–38; Grant 1959: 170–80.
- 13 For a similar defence of Mary Magdalene’s status cf. *Pistis Sophia* (e.g. ch. 61); *Gospel of Philip* 63.34–64.10; *Dialogue of the Saviour* 139.12f. See Marjanen 1996.
- 14 See Ps.-Hipp. *Ref.* 5.7.1.
- 15 Cf. *Pistis Sophia* ch. 42.; *Sophia of Jesus Christ* NHC III 92.4ff. (the opening response!).
- 16 Cf. Wilson 1962: 7; 1963: 291 and Tuckett 1986: 72–81.
- 17 E.g. Epiphanius’s libertine gnostics (*Pan.* 26.13.2–3), the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* and the *Pistis Sophia*.
- 18 Cf. *Gospel of the Egyptians* NHC III 69.6f., 16–20. The version in IV probably had no colophon (Böhlig and Wisse 1975: 8f.). The work is not identical with that mentioned in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 3 or Ps.-Hipp. *Ref.* 5.7.8f.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

EARLY JEWISH BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION



Alison Salvesen

The practice of commentary and interpretation in a faith community implies at the very least the acceptance of writings that have become normative in some way for the life and beliefs of that community even before a final canonization as 'Holy Scripture'. Interpreters were influenced by a variety of factors, such as the need to explain the Scriptures to later generations unfamiliar with the language or attitudes of the original works, and the desire to harmonize both apparent discrepancies between Scripture and contemporary custom or teaching, and also inconsistencies within Scripture itself.

INNER-BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

In the case of Judaism, this practice of interpretation goes back a long way, even into the Hebrew Bible itself, and is sometimes termed *Inner-biblical Interpretation*. For instance, the writer responsible for the book of Chronicles ('the Chronicler') based his work on material found in what we know as the books of Samuel and Kings. He emphasized certain aspects of these accounts while diminishing others in accordance with his own particular aims. For instance there is a much greater focus on the Temple in Jerusalem, the cult, and the Davidic monarchy, but no mention of David's gradual rise to kingship over Israel and Judah, Absalom's revolt, or the less creditable episodes of David's life such as his adultery with Bathsheba and his part in Uriah's death. It is hard to be certain of the date of the Chronicler, but the fourth century BCE is likely. The book of Chronicles was eventually accepted as part of Scripture, though in Jewish tradition it is considered part of the 'Writings', and does not appear among the Former Prophets with the other historical books which it parallels.

REWRITTEN BIBLE

As the biblical books became more widely known and authoritative among Jews, the stories could be reinterpreted in different ways, from a variety of perspectives. This genre is often known as the 'Rewritten Bible', and many examples can be found in the early period (up to the end of the first century CE) especially among the

Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran, though in the latter case many of the texts are so fragmentary that it is difficult to say much about their treatment of Scripture. Flavius Josephus and Philo Judaeus are also notable exponents of the genre.

Jubilees

The apocryphal book of *Jubilees* survives in its entirety only in Ethiopic, but Hebrew fragments of the work have been found at Qumran and Masada, and small portions are known in Greek and Latin translation. *Jubilees* is a version of Genesis 1–Exodus 20 dictated at God’s command by an angel (*Jub* 1.27) to Moses on Mount Sinai. Its treatment of the biblical story includes folkloric additions such as the young Abraham’s defiance of his father’s idolatry; the eternal character of the Mosaic Law, which the ancients observed even before its actual promulgation at Sinai; and, most notably, a great interest in calendars and chronology. *Jubilees* promotes the idea of the year consisting of 364 days, so that religious festivals will always fall on the same day of the week, and also divides world history into periods of forty-nine years, each equal to one ‘jubilee’. Presenting this book as if it were a kind of second revelation of the Law from Sinai is an obvious attempt to promote the views of the writer and the group to which he belonged. From the interest in the festivals and calendar it is thought that he was a priest, and that the work dates from the mid-second century BCE.

Genesis Apocryphon

The *Genesis Apocryphon* found in Cave 1 at Qumran (1QapGen) is another interpretation of the Genesis narrative, this time in a more popular style. Though fragmentary, we have enough of the text to see that it renders the patriarchal narratives of the Bible into a literary Aramaic better understood by Palestinian Jews than the original classical Hebrew. The work probably dates from sometime in the first century BCE. The writer introduces new elements: for instance, Noah’s birth is out of the ordinary and therefore his father suspects his wife of infidelity with one of the angels, and Pharaoh’s messengers are given a speech in which they praise Sarah’s beauty at length. The *Genesis Apocryphon* omits some of the original details, and conflates episodes such as the abductions of Sarah by a king in Genesis 12 and 20. Harmonizing [chapters 12](#) and [20](#) also serves to remove any dubious behaviour on the part of Abraham: in the biblical account of Genesis 12 he is open to charges of greed and cowardice for letting Sarah be taken away in return for cattle and slaves (Gen 12.15–16). In the *Genesis Apocryphon*, however, Sarah is taken away by force, and Abraham is given an anguished prayer in which he begs God for justice and asks him to prevent Sarah’s defilement. God sends an evil spirit upon Pharaoh’s household, and it is only when Abraham has prayed for Pharaoh to be healed and Sarah is restored to her husband that Abraham is enriched. Pharaoh gives Sarah gold, silver and fine clothes in reparation for his abduction of her, which reflects Genesis 20 rather than [chapter 12](#).

First Enoch

The composite pseudepigraphical work known as *1 Enoch* is preserved in its entirety only in Ethiopic, though fragments of five Aramaic copies have been found at Qumran. Within it *1 Enoch* 6–11 appears to be a separate document that develops and expands Genesis 6–9. Genesis 6 briefly presents a myth concerning a descent of the sons of God to the daughters of men, the Nephilim who result from these unions, and the Lord's determination to bring the Flood in order to blot out humans and their wickedness. *Enoch* 6–11 interprets the sons of God as 'angels, the sons of heaven', giving them names, and describing how they teach the women magic. Their offspring are giants who ravage the earth, while the angels teach humans astrology and how to make weapons, jewellery, cosmetics, and dye. This leads to all kinds of corruption in the world. The souls of the dead cry out for justice, and the archangels respond by petitioning the Lord, who decrees a flood to cleanse the earth but promises peace and eternity for the future. The aim of *1 Enoch* 6–11 appears to be the explanation of a difficult biblical passage and a justification of God's action in sending the Flood by emphasizing the enormity of the corruption that preceded it. Thus an ancient legend in the Hebrew Genesis has been converted into criticism of contemporary civilization and a promise of resolution by divine judgment in the end times.

Pseudo-Philo

The *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo, written around the turn of the first millennium, reinterprets the history of Israel from Adam to David in a selective manner. Genesis 1–3 and Leviticus are omitted, yet the very minor character Kenaz (known only as brother of Caleb and father of Othniel in Judg 3.9, 11) has [chapters 25–8](#) of the *Biblical Antiquities* devoted to him as the first judge of Israel. Some traditions reappear later in rabbinic interpretations; for instance that Job married Jacob's daughter Dinah. The theology is that of the book of Deuteronomy, that is, sin has led to punishment, but God will one day bring restoration. The original work must have been composed in Hebrew and then translated into Greek, but the only version to survive is in Latin.

Other Works

Those writings that rework biblical passages with a legal and juridical content arguably belong to a separate genre from those in the category of 'Rewritten Bible'. However, often they too reflect an accommodation of Scripture to the beliefs of a particular group. For instance, at Qumran, the *Temple Scroll* (11Q19 and 11Q20) uses Deuteronomy as its base but brings in many other biblical texts to support the authority of the teachings presented. The style has been described as a mosaic, but this ignores the care taken with the structure of the *Temple Scroll*, and some prefer the term 'anthological', which emphasizes the careful coordination of the different verses used to justify a new legal approach to problems of, say, kingship or festival laws. The methodology of reconciling different texts is similar to later rabbinic

techniques of interpretation. It is noteworthy that the laws in the *Temple Scroll* are uttered directly by God in the first person, not relayed through Moses. As with *Jubilees*, the contents are presented as direct revelation to Israel at Sinai, not as interpretation on Scripture.

Josephus

A later example of the genre of 'Rewritten Bible' is the *Jewish Antiquities* of Flavius Josephus, who was a Jewish writer living in Rome in c. 90 CE. Josephus's motive is primarily apologetic, and the work is primarily addressed to non-Jews with the intention of combating Graeco-Roman anti-Semitism, especially in the wake of the Jewish struggle against Rome in 66–70 CE, which had ended in the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. As in the case of the *Genesis Apocryphon*, Josephus renders the narrative of the Hebrew Bible into the literary language of his audience: Greek. He also Hellenizes the Jewish Bible by making it part of a twenty-volume historical work on the Jews, deriving the last books from non-biblical historical sources. The model is evidently the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. In this way Josephus provides his people with a national history like that of the Greeks and Romans. He also demonstrates the antiquity and rationality of Jewish religious customs and thus their legitimacy.

Josephus's Hellenistic treatment extends to many details, such as the description of major characters who take on the qualities of Greek heroes and heroines, such as good birth, wisdom, piety, courage, beauty, hospitality, generosity, justice. Episodes that do not reflect well on Israel and its leaders for reasons of idolatry or immorality tend to be omitted by Josephus; for instance the Golden Calf (Exod 32) and the Brazen Serpent (Num 21.4–9), and Tamar's seduction of her father-in-law Judah (Gen 38). Others are retained with extenuating circumstances, such as when Abram sends the pregnant Hagar away in Genesis 16: her banishment is said to be the will of God (*J.Ant* I.217). Other Hellenistic features are the introduction of speeches and the heightening of dramatic or erotic elements: there is rather more passion in Josephus's account than in the Hebrew Bible.

Josephus plays down the role of the magical and miraculous in his account, perhaps in view of his sophisticated audience, though sometimes he tries to provide rational explanations, as in *Jewish Antiquities* I.107–8 when he says that the patriarchs' enormous lifespans were attributable to their good diet, religious merit, and the need to be able to observe the movements of the heavenly bodies over a long period in order to develop the sciences of astronomy and geometry for posterity. A combination of personal and Hellenistic misogyny is probably responsible for Josephus's lack of interest in the prominent women of the Hebrew Bible, such as Moses' mother in Exodus 1–2 (*J.Ant* II.210–23), almost completely eclipsed by her husband (who is hardly mentioned in the biblical account), and also Ruth the Moabite, the ancestress of King David. Josephus has no interest in Ruth's personality, or even in her exemplary fidelity to her widowed mother-in-law, and tells her story only to draw the lesson that God can raise up ordinary folk to greatness (*J.Ant* V.318–37).

Minor Hellenistic Jewish writers

Josephus's retelling of the Bible from historical and literary perspectives was not the first attempt to present Jewish Scripture in a Hellenistic guise. He was preceded by several Jewish writers, including the historians Demetrius, Artapanus, and Eupolemus, and the poets Ezekiel and Philo, but their work is much less well preserved than the *Jewish Antiquities*. Nevertheless we have enough material to see that all presented apologetic views of Jewish history and Scripture that glorified the great figures of Israel's past and tried to combat contemporary anti-Semitism, though the relationship of their works to the text of Scripture is often tenuous. Ezekiel the tragedian rewrote the Exodus story as a Hellenistic drama, called the *Exagoge*. Certain aspects of the original could give non-Jews the wrong impression, and so Ezekiel modified them. Zipporah, Moses' wife in Exodus 4, is identified in the *Exagoge* with the Ethiopian woman that he marries in Numbers 12.1, to avoid the suggestion that Moses was polygamous. Exodus 3.22, 11.2–3, 12.35–6 says that the Israelites borrowed Egyptian property and then took it away with them at the Exodus: thus they 'plundered the Egyptians', according to the biblical text. In common with later interpretations, Ezekiel says that this property was given as payment for the Israelites' work, and was not stolen from the Egyptians (*Exag* 165–6; cf. Philo *de Mosis* I.141).

Philo

Another major but very different Hellenistic Jewish interpreter of the Bible is Josephus's older contemporary Philo Judaeus. Philo, a member of the Alexandrian Jewish community, was strongly influenced by Stoicism, Pythagoreanism and Platonism while remaining an observant Jew. He probably knew no Hebrew and depended on the Greek translation of Scripture, which he regarded as equally inspired. There are apologetic aspects to his interpretation of Scripture, and he also tried to show that the Jewish Law revealed in the Pentateuch was absolute and perfect Truth in a philosophical sense.

Philo's biblical interpretation can be divided into three categories:

1. In the *Allegorical Commentaries* he explains Scripture on two levels, the plain meaning and the more elaborate allegorical sense pointing to the eternal reality behind the words. For instance, though he seems to regard the major figures of the Bible as historical personalities, he is much more interested in the spiritual types they represent: typically, in Philo's treatise *de Congressu*, Sarah is 'virtue', while Hagar is 'education'. He portrays Mosaic Law as philosophy rather than lawcode, though he is at pains to stress that the allegorical interpretation never invalidates the full observance of Jewish Law.
2. His systematic presentation of Jewish Law and his biographies of major biblical figures are given in free paraphrase in his *Exposition of the Law*, and so can be considered as belonging to the genre of 'Rewritten Bible'. However, his retelling of Scripture is less dramatic than that of Josephus, and he adds fewer speeches. For example, his version of Genesis 22 in *de Abrahamo* 167–77 has fewer additions to the story. The two levels of interpretation appear in this group of works

as well: there is the 'natural' meaning for the 'multitude', and the 'hidden' meaning for the 'few' (e.g. *de Abrahamo* 147).

3. The third genre Philo employs is that of 'Question and Answer', a running commentary in biblical sequence, giving the relevant text of Scripture and supplying an explanation. For instance, 'Why does God say "I will send fear to go before you"? The literal meaning is clear, for a strong force to terrify the enemy is fear . . . But as for the deeper meaning, there are two reasons why men honour the Deity, love and fear . . .' (*Questions and Answers* on Exodus II *21). Thus the answers cover both plain and allegorical senses.

Philo's striking use of allegory, seen throughout his works, is heavily indebted to the methods of the Homeric allegorists developed in his home city of Alexandria. These scholars regarded Homer as the perfect poet and philosopher and, to overcome the problem of the unedifying behaviour of gods and men, they employed allegorical explanations. Such methods seem strange to modern eyes, but were very popular in the early and medieval Church, which preserved Philo's works when they fell out of favour among Jews.

Philo's interpretations presuppose a widely known standard text form of Scripture in Greek, which he quotes frequently; and the actual wording is important for his exegesis, in contrast to the approach of Josephus, who, though thoroughly conversant with the text of Scripture in Hebrew, Greek and possibly Aramaic, converts the wording into literary Greek.

PESHER

Unlike the genre of 'Rewritten Bible', which does not necessarily depend on a standard form of Scripture, biblical interpretation in the form of commentary does assume an accepted (if not fully standardized) text. The genre of *commentary*, which is a very familiar form of biblical interpretation today, is found at Qumran as *Pesher*, literally 'interpretation'. Pesharim on the prophetic books of Hosea, Nahum, Micah, and Habakkuk and also on Psalm 37 take the form of lemma (quotation of a verse or phrase from the bible) plus comment, and they proceed in biblical order. They are products of the sectarian milieu, however, and use Scripture to legitimate the authority of the community's founder, the Teacher of Righteousness, to find allusions in the text of Scripture to contemporary events concerning the sect, and (especially) to predict what will happen in the end times. So the emphasis is on Scripture as proof-text for present doctrine, rather than on interpretation *per se*. An example would be the comment on Habakkuk 2.8b ('Because of the blood of men and the violence done to the land, to the city, and to all its inhabitants'), which runs, 'The interpretation of it concerns the Wicked Priest, whom God delivered into the hand of his enemies because of the iniquity committed against the Teacher of Righteousness and the men of his council, that he might be humbled by means of a destroying scourge, in bitterness of soul, because he had done wickedly to his elect' (1QpHab 9.8–12). The author has connected the biblical verse with the struggle between the High Priest and the sect's founder, the so-called 'Teacher of Righteousness'.

TRANSLATION

Biblical interpretation can also take the form of *translation*. Like commentary, it presupposes some sort of standard text.

Septuagint

The earliest rendering of the Hebrew Bible was of the Pentateuch, that is, the Torah consisting of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, central to Jewish life. It was probably produced in Alexandria in the third century BCE for the benefit of the large Greek-speaking Jewish community there. Legend attributes it to the work of seventy or seventy-two Palestinian Jewish translators, hence the name Septuagint, 'seventy'. Greek translations of other books followed, to which the name Septuagint (LXX) was also attached. On the whole, the interpretative element of LXX is minimal since the translators attempted to produce a fairly literal rendering in order to be faithful to the Hebrew text, especially in its cultic and legal sections. However, the poetic books, for example Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the Prophets, diverge more from the plain meaning of the Hebrew largely because the translators found the original text difficult to understand and had to fall back on their own intuition for the particular context, thus unintentionally introducing their own theology and attitudes. Later revisions of the LXX, for instance those of the school of Theodotion (turn of the era) and then of Aquila (c. 130 CE), attempted to bring the Greek translation closer to the Hebrew text form that was becoming standardized in Palestine. The more literal these revisions were, the less room there was for apparent interpretation, although a particular line of thinking can often be found in a single word. The Greek revision of Symmachus at the end of the second century CE is less literal and reflects contemporary rabbinic interpretation of the Hebrew text.

Targum

The loss of the knowledge of classical Hebrew among the Jews of Palestine and Babylonia was addressed in a similar manner as in Alexandria. It is not known at what stage the Aramaic translations known as Targumim (sing. Targum) emerged. Although fragments of written Targumim of the books of Job and Leviticus were discovered at Qumran, it seems that synagogue readings from the Hebrew Scripture (Torah and Haftarah) were rendered orally into Aramaic for some time, and were not written down until much later. Presumably the reluctance to give the Targumim a literary form relates to the desire to maintain the primacy and authority of the Hebrew text, which had already been superseded by the LXX in Greek-speaking communities. But in contrast to the LXX, which rendered the Hebrew quite closely, many Targumim are paraphrastic and incorporate a good deal of interpretation, though every word of the Hebrew is represented in translation. Consigning the Targumim to writing may have been a way of controlling the content of interpretative renderings as well as providing a crib or study tool. Common features of the many and varied Targumim would include a dislike of anthropomorphism (i.e. of God being described in human terms, such as having hands or eyes) and an

avoidance of ambiguity (for instance, rhetorical questions are converted into statements). Targum also develops themes already present in parts of the Bible; for instance, that sin has led to exile and Diaspora, that observing the Torah will lead to national and religious restoration, and that the Lord will one day send his Messiah to reign over his people.

THE ROLE OF TEXT AND CANON, RABBINIC MIDRASH

The practice of biblical interpretation takes on a new dimension when Hebrew Scripture is fully canonized. This means that a particular list (canon) of holy books gradually became normative for the Jewish community, and exclusive in that no other writings carried the same religious authority. The text itself became fixed, with a standard consonantal text circulating by the second century CE, and an authoritative reading of vowels was established in rabbinic tradition, leading to a fully vocalized text by the eighth century. The process of canonization and standardization, which was well under way by the first century CE, was given further impetus by the destruction of the Temple and its aftermath. The loss of the sacrificial cult and the end of the authority of the priests and political leaders meant that the study of Scripture and religious tradition became more central in Jewish life, under the leadership of the nascent rabbinic movement. Interpretation became less concerned with rewriting the narratives or translating the Hebrew. Instead, the focus for rabbinic interpretation was the fixed Hebrew text in all its details, and these details are often the basis of interpretation.

The term most generally used of biblical interpretation by the rabbis is *midrash*, which loosely translated means 'investigation'. However, there is much debate concerning the exact definition and scope of midrash. It is clear, however, that the Hebrew text is the foundation and focus of the exegetical activity: there is no rewriting, only exposition and reconciliation where necessary. It is also generally agreed that midrash can be divided into two main types: (a) *haggadic midrash*, which concerns narrative material and often involves folkloric expansions of the text that develop the story in some way, link different episodes, or reconcile differences; (b) *halakhic midrash*, which seeks to extrapolate principles from biblical examples *or* to justify existing practice from the biblical text. Halakhic interpretations can also explain difficulties or apparent contradictions between different rulings or between ancient and current practice. Some freedom is possible with haggadic midrash (= haggadah), since different versions of a story do not affect religious observance. But in the case of halakhic midrash there is much less flexibility and the details of the Hebrew text assume great importance, as with any modern legal document, since the interpretations would provide guidance and authority for everyday life. In fact, the rabbis often had differences of opinion over legal interpretation, recorded in literature, but it was important to demonstrate that the correct methodology had been used to arrive at any ruling.

The corpus of literature containing rabbinic interpretation of Scripture is vast, partly because the latter underpinned almost everything they discussed. So although there are *midrashim* (effectively commentaries) to most of the biblical books, with

material dating from the second century onwards, interpretations of Scripture are also found scattered throughout the texts that encode rabbinic legal discussions: the Mishnah, the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, and the Tosefta.

The earliest midrashim naturally cover the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the Torah or Pentateuch, which are fundamental to Judaism. They vary in content according to the nature of the contents of each scriptural book. *Beresith Rabbah* is a haggadic commentary on Genesis, the *Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael* is a mixture of haggadah and halakhah on most of Exodus, while *Sifra Leviticus* and *Sifrei Numbers* and *Deuteronomy* are halakhic. Most verses receive some sort of comment. It should be stressed that all these have the nature of compendiums of interpretations, ordered according to biblical sequence. Later, commentaries were produced for other books of the Bible. There are also the homiletic midrashim, such as *Pesikta de Rab Kahana* and *Pesikta Rabbati*, which are collections of discourses on the Scriptural readings for the Sabbaths and festivals. In the midrashim, though individual opinions may be attributed to particular rabbis, they are not necessarily the origin of those ideas, which are often traceable to earlier sources. But the transmission of an older tradition by a famous rabbi demonstrated its authority.

The methodology used by the rabbis in biblical interpretation is rarely explicit and different techniques are often used by different rabbis on the same verse. Some methods and traditions go back centuries and can be seen at work in some of the texts mentioned earlier, such as the pesharim and Pseudepigrapha. Certainly there are similarities between Philo's literal and allegorical interpretations, and the plain (*peshat*) and metaphorical (*derash*) meanings given by the rabbis. Peshat involved an examination of the general context of the word or verse, its philology, and similar uses elsewhere in Scripture. Thus R. Berekiah in *Genesis Rabbah* II.1 connects Genesis 1.2, 'the earth was a formless void', with the very similar wording of Jeremiah 4.23 to illustrate its meaning. But shortly after the same Hebrew words are interpreted symbolically (i.e. as *derash*), as referring to the 'nothingness' of Adam and of Cain (*Gen Rabbah* II.3–4). *Derash* could be used even when the literal interpretation seems obvious. Thus the biblical law on retribution in Exodus 21.24, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', is not understood literally but metaphorically, as referring to the worth of the eye or tooth, and therefore to monetary compensation (*Mekhilta of R. Ishmael*, *Nezikin* 8). However, the same passage in the *Mekhilta* brings in other parallels to support this legal principle. One suspects that because payment for physical injury had become the current custom, the rabbis needed to justify this contemporary practice that appeared to contradict the plain sense of a particular verse. To do this they employed accepted methods of interpretation in order to show that the principle was in harmony with Scripture.

Allegory was also employed where the literal meaning of Scripture seemed too commonplace, as in Ecclesiastes 9.8, 'let your garments always be white': R. Jochanan ben Zakkai in *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* understood this to mean that one should always be 'clothed' with good deeds. Metaphor also avoided the difficulties of literal interpretation as with Song of Songs, the canonicity of which was debated because of its apparent lack of interest in religion and its highly erotic content. In this case the entire book was read as an allegory of God's love for Israel. However, the rabbis did not use typology as Philo had, such as identifying biblical characters with

spiritual types. To them Abraham, Moses, David, and so on, were fully historical figures, heroes and exemplars to contemporary Jews.

One of the most basic principles of their interpretation was that Scripture was God-given, eternally valid, and could not contain contradictions or redundancies. So conflicting statements were reconciled, and every detail was significant, including grammatical particles such as 'also', 'this', 'with', 'only'. Unusual words are explained by turning their consonants into acronyms, a technique known as *notarikon*: for instance the word *lāšād*, used to describe the flavour of manna in Numbers 11.8, is understood as a combination of dough (*layiš*), oil (*šemen*), and honey (*d'ḥaš*) (*Sifre Num* 89). Because Hebrew letters were used to represent numbers in antiquity, each had a numerical value, and by totalling up the numbers of the individual letters in a word it was possible to arrive at interesting interpretations. This was called *gematria*. A notable example of this occurs in a widespread interpretation of Genesis 14.14, where 318 servants are said to accompany Abraham in his pursuit of his nephew's captors. Since Abraham had a servant named Eliezer, the letters of whose name added up to 318, it was understood that Abraham was accompanied by Eliezer alone (*Gen Rabbah* 43.2). This makes the success of Abraham's mission all the more miraculous. As with 'Rewritten Bible', midrash could extend and update scriptural principles. In this way the biblical prohibition of the cult of the god Molech (Lev 18.21), no longer practised in rabbinic times, was taken to cover all idolatry (*Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael*, *Babodesh* 6, and Exod 20.3). It is hard to do justice to the wealth and variety of rabbinic midrash. Though it has a clear practical function in clarifying Scripture and making it relevant, at times the rabbis appear to be merely demonstrating their skill in applying the complex techniques of midrashic interpretation, to produce some surprising or entertaining results.

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EARLY CHRISTIAN BIBLICAL
INTERPRETATION

Mark Edwards

The history of early Christian exegesis is inseparable from that of the New Testament. Presenting the work and death of Christ as the key to Jewish prophecy, the Gospels and Epistles offered specimens of exegetic practice, while later portions justified the ascription of a comparable authority and density to these 'apostolic' writings. The canon shaped the doctrine of its readers, and this doctrine curbed additions to the canon; opacity of style or a profusion of new matter could outweigh the reputation of the author to entail the degradation or exclusion of a text. By the end of the second century, not only had the Ignatian, Clementine and Petrine documents been excluded, but even the composition of works professing to elucidate the sacred corpus seems to have been regarded with suspicion.¹ For Churchmen of this age, commentary on scriptures, old or new, was incidental to the refutation of errors that opponents had derived from them; thus the exegesis or redaction of Christian literature was at first a heterodox monopoly.

The first great figure (c. 140) was Marcion of Pontus, who collated (and occasionally abridged) the letters of Paul, composing prefaces to these and to the Gospel of Luke, which he also abbreviated. Tatian of Edessa, the founder of the world-denying Encratites, produced the *Diatessaron*, or harmony of the Gospels around 170 AD, thus bearing witness to the fourfold canon. The myths in Gnostic documents are expansions, imitations or revisions of the narratives in Genesis, while those of their more Christian successors, the Valentinians, seem to have aimed at simultaneous paraphrase of themes in Johannine and Pauline literature.² Their disparagement of the body and its Creator could be justified by appeal to 1 Corinthians 15.62, but allegory yielded a crop of fanciful confirmations to Heracleon in his *Commentary on John*.³ While Gnostic myth shows certain traits of midrash, this, the earliest treatise on an apostolic book, has more in common with Philo's exposition of the Pentateuch,⁴ which treats both law and history as a syllabus of virtues for the soul. In spite of Philo, only a limited value was accorded to the Old Testament by Valentinian exegetes, who declared that both the Law and the Legislator were defective emanations of the Spirit. The Church's tool for preserving the integrity of scripture was not allegory but typology, which interpreted the narratives and ceremonial precepts in the Old Testament as foreshadowings of the more transparent mysteries of the New. The first extensive essays on this subject are the Epistle to

the Hebrews, which sees Joshua and Melchizedek as forerunners of Christ, and the letter ascribed to Barnabas, which argues that the new covenant restores the original tables of the law that Moses shattered when he saw the golden calf. Setting a rule for others, he discerned the highest mysteries in the least possible commandments: circumcision and dietary laws have lapsed, but the enigmatic sacrifice of the red heifer is a symbol of the Passion (ch. 8). Some knowledge of the Paschal rite helped Melito of Sardis to demonstrate in his Easter homily (c. 170) that Christ is the minister of that redemption which the Exodus foretold.

In Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 160), the angels who communicated the will of God to the patriarchs are identified with a personal agent, the Word of God, who is one with yet distinct from him, his power being also visible in the fabric of the universe, the inspiration of the Hebrew prophets and even in the words of some who lived outside the Jewish dispensation. This, with all its burdens, was transitional, a shadow of the work to be accomplished when the Author of the prophecies became the Nazarene Jesus of the Gospels. His strange nativity and shameful death were anticipated in his own utterances to Israel, as was the unbelief of the Jews, whose punishment by exclusion from the kingdom was prefigured in circumcision.⁵ Recondite and unconsummated prophecies are the strongest proof that the Church has now become the second Israel: this is true above all of certain verses now found only in the Septuagint, which, Justin claims, were present in the Hebrew copies also until they were culled by Jewish teachers. The Septuagint, now proved to be such a useful reservoir of testimonia, held its own again the Hebrew in the West until the time of Jerome, and in the Eastern Church to the present day. But when, in the early third century, Tertullian (c. 160–c. 240) made a similar compilation against the Marcionites, the Old Testament itself was on trial, and with it not the divinity of Christ, but his Incarnation. Following Irenaeus (c. 180), Tertullian held that exegetes must conform to the 'rule of faith' that was handed down from the apostles and is sustained by the unanimity of the churches. When a text, read literally, conflicts with the rule, a figurative construction may be warranted: thus, because the Resurrection teaches us that flesh and blood can enter heaven, 1 Corinthians 15.50 must be applied, not to the substance, but to the works of flesh and blood, and more specifically to the Jews (*On the Resurrection* 50). This could be deemed an instance of metonymy, the trope of reference by association. Northrop Frye's assimilation of typology to metonymy,⁶ though questionable, is true in so far as both provided antidotes to the poison left in pious veins by metaphor and myth.

Heretics and Greeks defended myth on the grounds that its lewd veneer concealed the secrets of philosophy; Clement of Alexandria (fl. 200) rejoined in his *Protrepticus* that there was no cause to keep them secret, least of all in such a form. Yet were there not, as the pagan Celsus argued, numerous passages in scripture, and especially the Old Testament, that compromised the goodness, the omnipotence or the majesty of God?⁷ Clement's first reply, for which he will have found a precedent in Philo, is that God is so much higher than our thoughts that words can never do justice to him. His second is that if there were no difficulties in scripture, we should have no opportunity to increase our faith through knowledge. The wisdom thus acquired by the 'gnostic' Christian teaches him to regard philanthropy, not vigour

of body or intellect, as the test of moral progress. Thus, as he argues in *The Rich Man's Salvation*, the 'noetic' sense of Matthew allows the body to retain its goods so long as there is no avarice in the soul. This passage intimates that Clement posited different levels of understanding for the exegete; some have reckoned three or even four, in correspondence with the conventional divisions of philosophy.⁸ No trace of such a scheme is found, however, in what remains of Clement's writing on the New Testament Epistles; theories of multiple meaning are discernible in the *Excerpts from Theodotus* and *Prophetic Extracts*⁹ but not in the parts that represent the opinion of Clement. Alexandria did not yet possess a true discipline of exegesis, though Clement would appear to have been acquainted with contemporary thought on the application of Pythagorean maxims (*Stromateis* 5.27). True commentary began with the next generation, in the West as in the East. Hippolytus (d. 235), a dissident, Greek-speaking member of the Roman clergy, produced commentaries on Revelation, the Song of Songs and the book of Daniel. None of these afforded rich materials for a creed or moral homily; it is clear that they were chosen simply because they were arcane enough to require elucidation. The book of Revelation (undisputedly canonical until the mid-third century) had given rise to rumours of an imminent Second Coming; Hippolytus taught the Church to read the work through different lenses by observing that the Beast whose crimes will usher in the end is not so much a single person as a typological parody of Christ (*On Antichrist* 6). The authorship of this book was still debated, long after that of the Gospels had been settled. The antiquity of Daniel does not seem to have been impugned by any Christian,¹⁰ but Hippolytus appears to have at least a premonition of the modern view when, noting that the fanciful chronology of the last part supervenes on a more accurate account of the Maccabean age, he tells us that in the latter case the prophet was recounting 'what had happened in his own time' (*On Daniel* 4.48).

It was Origen (185–254) who bequeathed to the Church a theory of exegesis, philosophical in its premisses and compendious in its scope. Still more theologian than scholar, he continued to employ the Greek Bible, even though he seems to have mastered Hebrew. The purpose of his *Hexapla* – a synopsis of the Hebrew text, a Greek transliteration and four translations – was not to displace the Septuagint, but to clarify its obscurities and adjudicate between divergent readings. Notwithstanding his attempt to demonstrate against Julius Africanus that the story of Susanna could have been part of the original book of Daniel (Eusebius, *Church History* 6.31), he knew that another of his favourite texts, the Wisdom of Solomon, had no place in the Jewish canon. This did not deter him from appealing to it on doctrinal questions, any more than his doubts as to the authorship of Hebrews made him scruple to rest a case on its authenticity. None the less, he restricts himself to the primitive 'books of Solomon' when he argues that they are so arranged as to lead us through the stages of philosophy: Proverbs imparts morality, Ecclesiastes knowledge of the natural world, and the Canticle *theoria*, or the vision of the truth in God.¹¹ Origen and his followers applied this scheme to the progress of the soul, as it acquires first bodily discipline, then a deeper understanding of God's purposes, and finally the theological insight that belongs to a perfect spirit. In Origen's longest exercise in Biblical criticism, each of these three elements in the human person answers to one of the coinherent senses that can be distinguished in the Word of God.

One is often told that these three senses are the literal, the moral and the enoptic.¹² But the last term has no status in Greek or English, there is no equivalent to the first in Origen, and the moral sense is surely the literal one if the text itself is a command. The one that Origen styles the body of scripture is the easiest to define: it is the narrative or *historia* where the language is indicative, and the literal application where the language is imperative. But for a handful of stumbling-blocks, which God puts there to arouse the higher faculties, the bodily sense is always true and sufficient for the faithful.¹³ The third, which Origen calls the mystical, we call typological: in every word of scripture it leads us back to the one ubiquitous and undivided Word. Scripture, as he tells Celsus, is a continual descent of Christ, who 'becomes flesh, as it were, and speaks to us with literal voice' (*Against Celsus* 4.15). The second sense is frequently subsumed in the other two, as soul is often subsumed in flesh or spirit in a Christian anthropology: but taking the Apostle's question 'Does God care for oxen?' (1 Cor 9.9) as his paradigm, Origen implies that the 'soul' of scripture assigns each work of God to its due place in the cosmic order (*First Principles* 4.2). If the soul and spirit, then, are respectively cosmology and theology, Origen's higher senses correspond to the two degrees of allegorical interpretation recognized by students of mythology in his era;¹⁴ and this triple scheme was adopted in the next century, with little change, by Gregory of Elvira and his fellow-Origenist Ambrose of Milan.¹⁵

Origen wrote commentaries and homilies on almost the whole of scripture, speculating freely in the commentaries, though seldom drawing all three senses from a single text. The 'bodily' sense was rejected only when it seemed offensive, insignificant or at odds with other passages. The literal sense, as we should call it, is not suppressed but redeemed and purified in his exegesis, just as the body is not suppressed but redeemed and purified in his eschatology. It was in fact a literal construction of Genesis 1–2 that made him espouse a theory of two creations, one of the inner and one of the outer man (*Genesis Homily* 1). Conversely, it was Origen's literal belief that flesh and spirit were reconciled in the Incarnation that enabled him to harmonize John and Matthew by describing one as a parabolic, the other as a historical account of the same events (*Commentary on John* 10.5). His fame as an interpreter survived the first complaints against his doctrines, but fell in the wake of the Arian controversy (318–25), when Marcellus of Ancyra, a would-be orthodox theologian, denounced his predilection for the enigmatic texts (Eusebius, *Against Marcellus* 1.4.3). Even his ardent champion Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–339) pursued a more philological, less speculative method. The most important fruits of this were a chronography, a concordance of the Gospels, some notes on the evolution of the canon in his *Church History*, and a small gift to the allegorist in his *Onomasticon*, or key to topographic names.¹⁶

The great heresiologist Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315–403) maintained that God's design in human history implied a first man and a first transgression, both of which, he said, had been denied in Origen's arbitrary treatment of the Fall (*Ancoratus* 55–62). Admitting, for his own part, that the book of Revelation is enigmatic, that a title claimed by Christ can be metaphorical and that the Bible uses types of things to come, he none the less gives voice to the ruling spirit of his century, which, without defining allegory, compelled Greek-speaking Christians to disclaim the use of it.

Basil of Caesarea (c. 330–79) applied the literal rule to Genesis, but his younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–95), coined a new term, *cheiragogia* (leading by the hand), and thus baptized the classical principle of looking for the *skopos*, or intention, of the text.¹⁷ Origen had not neglected this, but it was frequently in conflict with his customary practice of interpreting texts in the light of distant parallels. Gregory had learned, no doubt from the Platonists,¹⁸ that the *skopos* demands a certain tone or ethos, which is suited to a particular intellectual disposition in the reader. Having learned both his penmanship and his preaching in the schools of rhetoric, Gregory could not deny that a text requires an audience; yet he argued that the addressees of a sacred text are not secular but spiritual contemporaries of its prophetic author. Nothing proves this more clearly than the Song of Songs, whose *skopos*, as Origen knew already, must be something better than mortal love. In reading it, we need the Spirit to take us by the hand through paths of deepening obscurity, until, with the mortification of the senses and the extinction of every appetite, whether physical or mental, the inner man achieves sublime and peaceable communion with God. Gregory practised similar meditations on the Psalms, Ecclesiastes and the *Life of Moses* – the last in emulation of a famous work by Philo – but over the next millennium the supreme resource of mysticism was the Song of Songs.

In the late fourth century, however, other mystics quoted scripture in the old, desultory fashion; and, while some Desert Fathers might possess no other volume than a Bible, it served chiefly as an oracle for instruction and reproof.¹⁹ Scholarship passed into the hands of Antiochene theologians, for whom allegory was simply a falsification of the text. In his commentaries on the Pauline letters, John Chrysostom (c. 354–407), Bishop of Antioch, drew attention to historical circumstances, modes of argument, and the eloquent devices by which Paul secured the interest, the obedience or the sympathy of his audience. He does not scruple to draw upon the technical vocabulary of rhetoric,²⁰ though, unlike some modern exponents of ‘rhetorical criticism’, he does not conclude that Paul had undergone a formal training in this discipline. On the contrary, Paul’s bursts of anger, sorrow and solicitude are ascribed to virtue rather than technique, and the distance between his Greek and the classical idiom is freely, though euphemistically, exposed. Each of Chrysostom’s homilies concludes with a discourse that goads the audience to its duty, but in a pure and copious style that spares the dignity of a cultivated ear. In the fifth century many of his comments found their way into the sparser annotations of Theodoret (c. 393–466) on the Pauline corpus, together with a coda at the end of every letter saying where it was believed to have been composed. Not all of these are credible, but Theodoret was evidently a scholar who approached the New Testament in a modern spirit. Comparison with Gregory of Nyssa shows how differently the two Testaments had fared in Christian study. Knowing or caring little about the situation dramatized in the Song of Songs, Gregory traced its ‘cheiragogic’ action on the spirit of the reader; Theodoret, whose eyes are fixed on Paul and his correspondents, is not afraid to attribute to him a ‘psychagogic’ action on their feelings, even if this entails that certain passages had nothing to contribute to the future edification of the Church.

Hence it is that the work of Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428) is a landmark in the Christian exegesis of the Old Testament. In his expositions on the Psalms, he

urged that the best interpretation is not the one that conveys the largest body of doctrinal truth, but the one most faithful to the purpose of the author and the occasion for which he wrote. He argued that the Psalms had many purposes – to praise the Lord, to edify through personal experience and to prophesy the future²¹ – and that only when the New Testament demanded it should we look in them for presages of Christ. Galatians 4.24, where Paul had stated that some stories in the Old Testament were allegories, had been dashed aside by Chrysostom with the statement that allegory means typology; but Theodore, who was almost equally hostile to the latter method, made this verse the occasion of a vigorous polemic against the allegorists, which he seems to have expanded to the dimensions of a book. He was not a fundamentalist, since he sometimes treated Adam as a symbolic figure; nor was he a liberal theologian, as he did not deny the plenary inspiration of the scriptures, or the authenticity of the Davidic Psalms. Nevertheless, no other ancient critic worked so hard to prove that the faculties and perceptions of the author remain intact in their co-operation with the Holy Spirit. In this, as in his teaching on free will and on the integral humanity of Christ, he was pressing common principles to exceptional conclusions – a fact that may explain why little of his exegesis survives in Greek. Tradition favoured the commentaries on John and on the prophets by his posthumous destroyer Cyril (d. 444), who, like all Alexandrians, held that an allegory is tenable wherever it serves to vindicate the doctrine of the Church.

Cyril proved himself a true Alexandrian in his adherence to the Septuagint, the authority of which, as a dispensation to the Gentiles, had been upheld in Epiphanius's tract *On Weights and Measures*. Himself a Palestinian and a poor scholar in five languages, Epiphanius feared that Symmachus, Aquila and Theodotion would betray their readers into Judaism. In the neighbourhood of Antioch, however, the Syrian version or Peshitta, based on the Hebrew, enjoyed wide currency, giving rise to homiletic paraphrases by Aphrahat and the poet Ephrem. Greek-speaking Antiochenes, such as Diodore of Tarsus and Eusebius of Emesa, turned to both the Hebrew and the Syriac in order to correct or elucidate the Septuagint.²² The results of their researches took the form of topical questions (*Quaestiones*) in the manner of those compiled by Philo on Genesis and Exodus. When Jerome (c. 347–420), the only Latin speaker known to have been an admirer of Epiphanius, joined this scholarly tradition with his *Questions on Genesis*, he found himself unable to sustain his mentor's preference for the Septuagint. He embarked on a new translation of the scriptures, using only Hebrew sources for the Old Testament and thus accepting only the Hebrew canon. The project aroused hostility, and some detected errors in the translation; he replied that even apostolic writers were not always faithful in their quotations either to the Hebrew or to the Greek (Letter 57). For all that, he admitted that the Greek portions of the Old Testament had a certain inspiration, and revealed the conservative tendency of his own thought when he argued that apparent misquotations in the New Testament could be justified by consultation of Hebrew manuscripts. He maintained that even the Hebrew of Isaiah 7.14 sufficed to prophesy the Virgin Birth,²³ and his cultivation of the 'Hebrew truth' (*Hebraica veritas*) did not make him a literalist. On the contrary, he commended tropological readings even of the New Testament where the literal sense was useless to the reader. While censuring the theology of Origen, he borrowed from him constantly and openly in

his commentary on Ephesians, though occasionally declining to pursue him to the end of his speculations. Whether he or Origen was the better Hebraist remains a question in dispute.

Only with the addition of the Greek or 'apocryphal' books, did Jerome's Bible become the Vulgate of the Latin Church. Yet even in the Greek world of the fourth century it was no rare thing to endorse the Hebrew canon, as we see from the thirty-ninth of Athanasius's Festal Letters²⁴ and the Fourth Catechetical Homily by Cyril of Jerusalem. On the other hand, African codes from 393 to 419 continued to insist that the apocrypha be included in the canon, and this was the position of Augustine (354–40) in his essay *On Christian Doctrine*, though he was well aware that Solomon did not write all the books that bear his name (2.12). Not authorship but the consensus of the churches was his test of canonicity, and the same logic that had sanctified the Greek Old Testament guaranteed the inspiration of the Latin versions. In difficulties, one might collate translations or resort to those who knew the ancient languages, but even in that case Greek was as good as Hebrew. While Jerome seems to have sought some compensation in the Hebrew for the poor style of the Septuagint, Augustine is content to inveigh against the love of eloquence, with the eloquence of Jerome's own apology for the barbarous Greek of Paul. He did not, however, allow the same latitude in exegesis: in a mild rebuke to his predecessor Optatus, he maintains that in using scripture against schismatics, we should not develop fanciful applications of the Old Testament, but vindicate the catholic understanding of the Church from the clear intention of the text.²⁵ Charity, which constitutes the inner man, is the test of Christian purity, and charity is the rule that guides the interpreter of scripture (*On Christian Doctrine* 3.14–15, etc.). The spirit of the sacred text, which emancipates us from the carnal reading, is not allegory but a literal and perfect reverence for the law of love.

Augustine waived his objection to allegory when the reader would otherwise have been misled into repeating an immoral act reported in the Old Testament (*On Christian Doctrine* 3.24, etc.). For allegory we should strictly say typology: the Christian will be less inclined to imitate the mendacity of Rahab if he knows that these things signify in the higher dispensation (*On Lying* 33). The literal truth of the narrative was not denied, for when Augustine called a reading allegorical, he meant that, however orthodox and fruitful, it was subsidiary to the primary one 'according to the letter'. This becomes apparent in his huge dissertation *On Genesis according to the Letter*, where he toyed with the notion that the opening chapter is a parable of redemption, only to say that it was an allegory and therefore not germane to his present purpose (1.33–4). His master Ambrose (c. 340–97) had mingled the allegorical and the literal in his treatises *On the Six Days* (*Hexameron*) and *On Paradise*, and in a previous work, *On Genesis against the Manichaeans*, Augustine had built upon this precedent, arguing that Eden and its rivers are a parable for the Spirit's irrigation of the soul. Even the sense 'according to the letter' was not always the superficial one: if it were, one would be bound to construe the six days of creation as extended intervals, thereby compromising the omnipotence of God. Augustine proposed instead that the 'evening and morning', unintelligible without the sun and moon, betokened the instantaneous conversion of the potential to the actual, or a transition in the angelic mind from ignorance to knowledge (4.40–56). This 'physiological'

reading, far from literal as it is, does more justice to the *skopos* of the text than that of Barnabas (15.4), who suggested that the days are archetypes of the six millennia that will measure the whole duration of the world.

Augustine would appear to have been the first exegete who felt the need for a comprehensive theory of the sign.²⁶ In the works *On Christian Doctrine* and *On Genesis according to the Letter* he distinguished the written characters from the image that they engender in the 'spirit', and this in turn from the imageless idea by which the mind interprets it. Body, spirit and intellect thus supplanted the old trichotomy of body, soul and spirit, and were harnessed not to discrete senses of scripture, but to three concurrent factors in the understanding of it. The unity of the person and the unity of scripture thus gave mutual guarantees, but the consequences for hermeneutic practice were even slighter than those of Origen's triple scheme. Nor did he give much play to the seven rules of the contemporary sectarian Tyconius, except when he commended them to readers of *On Christian Doctrine* (3.44–56). These required the reader (1) to distinguish between the body and the head of Christ in typological sayings about his person; (2) to recognize that what is true of Christ is not yet wholly true of his earthly body; (3) to perceive the promise within the law; (4) sometimes to read generically what is said of a single subject; (5) to reconcile dissonant computations of the same time by mastering the numerical conventions; (6) to be aware that Hebrew is prone to duplication of 'recapitulation' of previous matter; (7) to distinguish between the devil and his body on earth, as we do with that of Christ. Augustine himself, like all great critics, was better than his theories, showing all the versatility of an able and systematic theologian who is determined to make the Bible speak for him. Thus, while he has been frequently upbraided for his florid, obscure and labyrinthine readings, he is just as often brief, perspicuous and rectilinear. Once he had decided that his business was to demonstrate the unity and pervasive inspiration of a corpus so diverse in style, in audience, in content and in time of composition, he quickly came to see that no one tool is omniscient, and that even the most unwieldy sometimes works where others fail.²⁷

NOTES

- 1 G. Hahnemann, *The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* (Oxford 1992), has not convinced me that this Roman canon is later than one would deduce from its allusion to Hermas as a near-contemporary.
- 2 On Valentinus (fl. 140) and his Alexandrian precursors see D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley 1992).
- 3 E. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis* (Nashville 1973).
- 4 On Philo (c. 40 BC – c. 40 AD) see D. Runia, *Philo and Early Christian Literature* (Assen 1993).
- 5 *Trypho* 24ff. See further O. Skarsaune, *Justin and the Proof from Prophecy* (Leiden 1979).
- 6 N. Frye, *The Great Code* (London 1982), 85.
- 7 Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.45. Celsus's polemic seems to date from c. 170.
- 8 P. Hadot, 'La division des parties de la philosophie dans l'antiquité', *Museum Helveticum* 35 (1979), 201–23.
- 9 Both indebted to Valentinian authors: *Extracts from Theodotus* 66 (typical/mystical; parabolic/enigmatic; plain/naked); *Prophetic Extracts* 5–9.
- 10 On the pagan Porphyry, and his possible debt to Syriac commentators, see P. M. Casey, 'Porphyry and the Origin of the Book of Daniel', *Journal of Theological Studies* 26 (1976), 15–33.

- 11 *Proem to Song of Songs*, p. 75 in edition of W. Baehrens (Leipzig 1925).
- 12 H. De Lubac, *L'Exégèse Médievale*, part 1, vol. 1 (Paris 1959), 205.
- 13 *First Principles* 4.2.9. Cf. Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries* 1.11, and Julian the Apostate, *Hymn* 5, 22.
- 14 Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 3.9, on physiological and theological approaches.
- 15 Gregory, *Tractate* 5.1; Ambrose, *On Isaac* 68.
- 16 T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Berkeley 1981), 106–25.
- 17 R. A. Heine, *Gregory of Nyssa on the Inscriptions to the Psalms* (Oxford 1995), 20–9.
- 18 See proem to Proclus, *On the Timaeus*, etc.
- 19 L. Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert* (Oxford 1994).
- 20 On rhetorical practice and Christian hermeneutics see F. M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge 1997).
- 21 D. Zaharopoulos, *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Bible* (New York 1989), 83–4.
- 22 A. Kamassar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship and the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford 1993), 34–40. For a different view of Jerome's purpose see C. T. Hayward, *Jerome's Quaestiones in Genesim* (Oxford 1995).
- 23 A. Kamassar, 'The Virgin of Isaiah 7.14', *Journal of Theological Studies* 41 (1990), 51–76.
- 24 Though omitting Esther and including Baruch. The practice of Athanasius (298–373) may have influenced later theories of the *skopos*.
- 25 *Letter to Catholics* 42, on Optatus, *Against the Donatists* 3.3.
- 26 R. Markus, 'Augustine on Signs', *Phronesis* 2 (1957), 60–83, and especially *On Genesis according to the Letter* 12.23, on the commandment to love; this follows a division of perception into corporal, spiritual and intellectual. The roots of the theory may be Platonic or 'Pythagorean': see Porphyry on Aristotle, *Categories* 16a, cited in Boethius, *On Interpretation* 2.33.
- 27 I am grateful to the British Academy for a postdoctoral Fellowship that made possible much of my research for this chapter.



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PART IV

HISTORY

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CHAPTER TWENTY

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



Felicity J. Cobbing

INTRODUCTION

'Biblical archaeology' is a term often applied to the archaeology of the ancient Levant and embraces a number of perspectives, ranging from the broad to the more specific.

At the broader end of the scale, 'biblical archaeology' can be taken to mean the archaeology of the region in which the biblical narratives of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, were set.

Narrowing the definition somewhat, the term has also been used to mean the archaeology not only of the land in which the biblical narratives were set but of the time during which the events narrated took place.

At its most extreme, biblical archaeology is the archaeology of the ancient Levant, using the Hebrew Bible (the books of the Old Testament) as the primary source of information and motivation for exploration. Under this definition, biblical archaeology is often seen as having the aim of finding material, solid evidence for the places, people, and events of the biblical narratives, as a journey of faith, or a theological construct. This last definition characterized the development of Levantine archaeology by chiefly American scholars during the middle part of the twentieth century. The American contribution to biblical archaeology as defined above therefore forms the basis of this discussion.

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries

The roots of 'biblical archaeology' are to be found in the mid-nineteenth century, with the rediscovery of the splendid civilizations of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. As a near neighbour of these two ancient giants, and the home of the most profoundly significant influence on Western thought, religion and civilization, the Bible, Syro-Palestine and the Levant held obvious attractions for Western explorers and scholars.

In addition to the physical application of the infant subject of archaeology, the discipline of biblical criticism (analysing the biblical texts from a historical and/or

literary perspective) was being developed at this time. Thus it was thought that by excavating sites connected with the Bible, archaeology, together with geography, might provide solid physical proof of biblical places, events, and possibly even people, thereby cementing the biblical narratives in historical fact.

Initially Europeans – the French, Germans and British – were most active in the field. The Americans, although very much involved in the academic scholarship of biblical studies, were slower to approach the subject of biblical research from the more practical angles of archaeology and historical geography. This reticence might have been due to lack of funds and practical know-how, but it was perhaps also due to a less clearly defined political incentive. It must be remembered that at this time the European powers were all watching the slow but inexorable demise of the Ottoman Empire with considerable interest, and academic missions involving the physical surveying of the country, as well as establishing ideological and religious links with its past, might well have had less esoteric uses than the publication of worthy articles in obscure journals.

Having said this, one of the earliest scholars of distinction to make a significant contribution to the development of the physical study of the Holy Land was an American, Edward Robinson (1794–1863). Robinson was a Congregationalist minister, a biblical scholar, a linguist of considerable talents, and an able explorer. He combined an understanding of European, particularly German, academic methodologies relating to historical and linguistic studies with a deep conviction in the essential historicity of the biblical texts.

Robinson was highly sceptical of the traditional associations of biblical events with places that existed at this time. Through his field survey in Palestine and the Sinai in 1838, and later in Palestine in 1852, and his development of a set of rules for the linguistic comparative analysis of ancient Hebrew geographical terminology with modern Arabic, he established the study of biblical geography as a serious academic pursuit as opposed to a rather haphazard combination of local traditions and superficial, untested observations by Western travellers.

One of the most important organizations during the formative years of archaeology and exploration in Palestine and the Levant was the British Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), founded in 1865. The Fund was responsible for the ground-breaking *Survey of Western Palestine*, published between 1881 and 1884, the first accurate geographical survey of the whole of Palestine west of the Jordan River. The PEF continues to publish its academic journal, the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (PEQ), and an occasional monograph series.

On behalf of the PEF, Sir William Flinders Petrie, the distinguished Egyptologist and archaeologist, began excavations at Tell el-Hesi in southern Palestine with a six-week season in 1890. At the time of Petrie's work, Tell el-Hesi was thought to be the site of ancient Lachish. This was subsequently shown to be erroneous by the positive identification of Lachish with Tell ed-Duweir. Biblical Eglon has since been suggested as a candidate for Tell el-Hesi, but the location of the site does not fit the biblical description, and it is slightly ironical, therefore, that Tell el-Hesi remains a site of no known biblical significance.

Sir Flinders Petrie is often regarded as the founder of modern Near Eastern archaeology, developing as he did the principles of archaeological stratigraphic excavation,

and ceramic typology. The basic principles of stratigraphy were, in fact, first developed by geologists who noticed that in cases where the natural rock was exposed over a large area (a cliff face, for example), different layers were visible, suggesting that the different components were formed at different times, and deposited one on top of another in sequence. Clearly, in such a circumstance, the lowest layer represented the earliest deposition, and the top represented the latest.

Following the work of Heinrich Schliemann at Hissarlik in Anatolia in 1870, Petrie adapted these principles and applied them to archaeological excavations in Egypt and then the Levant. With the development of ceramic typology and seriation (the observation of gradual changes in pottery styles, and the arrangement of them in developmental sequences) it was possible to add chronological and cultural definition to the observed stratigraphy.

At Tell el-Hesi Petrie was the first archaeologist to apply these principles of stratigraphy and ceramic chronology to a Palestinian site, identifying three periods of occupation, which he termed 'Amorite' (c. 1700 BC), 'Phoenician' (1350–850 BC), and 'Jewish' (up to 450 BC). Although the terminology and dating of the material has since been put aside, Petrie's excavations at Tell el-Hesi established a strategy that has come to dominate the development of archaeological excavation in Palestine; that is, the stratigraphic excavation of large multiperiod tell (occupation mound) sites.

A second season at Tell el-Hesi was conducted on behalf of the PEF by Frederick Jones Bliss in 1893, and this represented the first significant involvement of an American in the archaeology of Palestine. Born in Lebanon, the son of missionaries, Bliss refined further the stratigraphic methodology employed by Petrie, but because of the time-consuming nature of his work, he was eventually dismissed by the Fund. The value of his work, however, was certainly recognized by some future key players, most notably William Foxwell Albright (below).

In 1903 Bliss delivered the Ely Lectures at Union Theological Seminary in New York City (Robinson's old school). These lectures were published under the title *The Development of Palestine Exploration* (1906), and this was to become a central work of scholarship in the field of biblical studies and biblical archaeology. In this volume the combination of Bible and archaeology is much in evidence, as was to be the case throughout the development of American archaeology in Palestine. Indeed, during this formative period most scholars, including Petrie and the Palestine Exploration Fund, as well as Bliss, were principally interested in undertaking work that could, in some way be related to the Bible, and little consideration was given to the pursuit of archaeological discovery in the region for its own sake.

In 1900 the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) were founded. A pledge of annual financial support from the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) enabled the new body to open its first research centre in Jerusalem itself in the same year. ASOR was the archaeological 'wing' of the Society for Biblical Literature (SBL), which had been established fifteen years before in 1880. At the beginning of its life, the school in Jerusalem was hindered by political instability in the region, but it was to play an important role in the development of American archaeology in the Levant in later years.

Initially, ASOR existed as a society to facilitate field research in Palestine itself, for the purposes of exploring the biblical geography, and conducting when possible

excavations to illuminate the biblical past. Although ASOR's interests soon broadened out to include areas of interest not necessarily connected with biblical studies, but falling under the wider umbrella of 'Orientalism', the geographical and cultural biases expressed by the founding fathers of SBL were to shape much of the research carried out by its affiliates.

It has been suggested that biblical archaeology as a tool for realizing biblical truth developed to a much greater degree in the United States than in Britain and Europe. The reasons for this difference in focus undoubtedly lay in the differences in the professional backgrounds of those involved in the subject at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Many of the pioneers of European, and especially British, field archaeology, were military men, with a talent (most of the time) for organization and method. In America, on the other hand, most of the practitioners of Syro-Palestinian archaeology came from seminary colleges with a personal and communal faith to strengthen and uphold. Although American archaeologists were no strangers to organization and method, and British and European archaeologists cherished their own biblical heritage, the evangelical nature of much American Christianity must also be taken into account.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Christian religious life in America underwent something of a re-evaluation of itself. Many Americans, lay people, clerics, and scholars alike, from all denominations redefined what seemed to some to be a slowly dwindling faith, and injected it with new enthusiasm.

The publication of the six-volume series of evangelical theology, entitled *The Fundamentals*, was a major catalyst for this religious wind-change, and affected not only American religious and social life, but also its academic life. As a part of this phenomenon, archaeology came to be seen increasingly as a useful and valid tool for the physical exploration of the biblical past, almost in the manner of a modern pilgrimage of discovery.

The rise of 'biblical archeology' and the Albrightian School (1920s–1960s)

Throughout the period of the Great War of 1914–18, which saw the demise of the Ottoman Empire, archaeological work in Palestine was halted. Activities were resumed in 1919 under the British Mandate. Under the Ottoman administration excavators had been required to obtain a permit (or *firman*), but antiquities laws specific to Palestine were not formalized until the post-war era with the establishment of a Department of Antiquities.

In 1919, largely through the efforts of the American Egyptologist J. H. Breasted, and with a generous donation from J. D. Rockefeller Jr, the highly influential Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago was founded. The aims of the Oriental Institute were initially far more wide reaching than those of ASOR, as it was intended to be a repository for information collected by all disciplines working in Egypt and the Near East, and not just those directly concerned with biblical studies and biblical archaeology. Great rivalry developed between the Oriental Institute and ASOR, which to some extent still exists to this day. Among the many research and field projects undertaken by the Oriental Institute in its early years was the

excavation of Megiddo. Beginning in 1925, the project was overambitious, aiming to expose the remains of this very large site completely, layer by layer, rather than targeting specific areas. The project ended with the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

Also in 1919 the PEF, together with the Jerusalem Literary Society (JLS) and the British Academy, founded the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (BSAJ), modelled on its sister organizations in Athens and Rome. The BSAJ enjoyed very close relations with ASOR, even sharing the same accommodation in Jerusalem for some time. After initially publishing its quarterly reports in the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, the BSAJ's own journal *Levant* was launched in 1969. Over the years the BSAJ was to play a major role in British and collaborative research and field projects in Palestine, nurturing some of the most important archaeological talents of the day, including J. W. Crowfoot, Dame Kathleen M. Kenyon, Basil Hennessey and Crystal M. Bennett. The consistent philosophy of the BSAJ has been to promote solid field methodology, focusing on the training of the excavators and the accurate publication of their results.

William Foxwell Albright (1891–1971)

One of the most influential, if not the most influential, Orientalists of the period between 1920 and 1970 was William Foxwell Albright, the son of self-supporting Methodist missionary parents. Albright was raised in Chile, but his family moved to Iowa in 1903, and he graduated from Upper Iowa University in 1912. A brilliant natural linguist, he knew Spanish, French, German, Latin, and Greek, and, during his time at college, he taught himself Akkadian and Hebrew. While a high school teacher, he sent the proofs of an article he had written concerning an Akkadian word, which had been accepted by a German scholarly journal, to the Assyriologist Paul Haupt at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. On the basis of this article, Albright was granted a four-year scholarship to Johns Hopkins. He won the Thayer Fellowship for study in Jerusalem, but was unable to use it until the end of World War I. He gained his PhD in 1916, after which he taught in Haupt's Oriental Seminary at Johns Hopkins. It was Haupt who introduced Albright to biblical criticism. Haupt himself was sceptical about the historical truth of the biblical accounts, a position that very probably influenced Albright during the early part of his career, despite the conclusions he was to draw later on in life.

Albright arrived in Jerusalem in 1920, becoming the director of the American School of Oriental Research (ASOR) in Jerusalem (today known as the William Foxwell Albright Institute of Archaeological Research). During his ten-year directorship, the Jerusalem school began to flourish. Within a month, he had launched the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (BASOR), which he used as a vehicle in which to publish much material from his early excavations, and was its editor from 1930 to 1968.

The physical reality of the 'Holy Land' had a major impact on Albright, to such an extent that, according to his own statements, he became convinced of the Bible's fundamental historicity. This led to the establishment of the theory of Albrightian biblical archaeology – the cementing of biblical narratives in physical and historical reality through archaeological exploration.

In 1929 Albright became chairman of the Oriental Seminary at Johns Hopkins, a position he held until his retirement in 1958. It was during this period of tutorship that he developed the so-called Albrightian School of biblical archaeology, which was to dominate much of the field, producing a number of talented, dedicated, and faithful young students. The strength of his personality and ideology, and his undeniable scholarship, proved to have an enduring effect on his students. It would not be out of place to describe his relationship with his students as patriarchal. Outstandingly prolific, Albright published a huge quantity of work, amounting to over 1100 books and articles. The range of his scholarly abilities was exceptional, covering all areas of ancient Near Eastern studies, from linguistics and literary criticism, through to historical research and archaeology.

As an archaeologist, Albright possessed a particular talent for the detailed typological study of ceramic material, or 'pottery reading' as it is known. What made him an exceptional scholar, however, was his ability to see the results of his archaeological research in the broader context of the ancient Near East as a whole.

Albright excavated at Tell el-Fûl (biblical Gibeah) in 1922, and at Tell Beit Mirsim from 1926 to 1932. Between 1929 and 1935 he conducted low-budget excavations at Bethel and Beth-Zur. Albright's excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim, however, perhaps provide the clearest example of his practical fieldwork, and of the contribution he made to the discipline of Syro-Palestinian archaeology as a whole.

The site of Tell Beit Mirsim lies 20 km (12 miles) south-west of Hebron, and 13.5 km (8 miles) south-east of Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir) in the chalk foothills of the region known in the biblical texts, and in the present day, as the Shephelah of Judah.

The procedure of excavation employed by Albright at the site was the 'Broad-Site' method, initially developed by George Andrew Reisner and Clarence Fisher during their excavations at Samaria in 1909. Using this method, excavations were conducted over a large area in an attempt to uncover as much of the plan of any given phase as possible, placing an emphasis on the architecture and spatial relationships between buildings and features within any particular phase. The nature of the excavations were therefore horizontal rather than vertical, in other words, across the site rather than down into it. Photographs of all features exposed were taken, producing a pictorial record of the entire excavated site, a first in archaeology in the region. In addition, plans, section plans, and notes of all excavated remains were required. Thus, a system of excavation was developed that appeared to fulfil the complex needs of the archaeologist working on tell sites in Palestine.

At Tell Beit Mirsim, Albright excavated two main areas. The first, a broad exposure on the south-eastern end of the tell, was also excavated vertically, sometimes down to bedrock. Here the chronological sequence was established. On the other side of the tell, in the north-western area, a large exposure of the uppermost occupation level (stratum A) only was cleared. Overall, ten major strata (occupation levels) were excavated (some of them subdivided). These were given letter designations, from the latest, 'A' (nearest the surface and hence the first to be uncovered and identified), to the earliest, 'J' (the deepest level of occupation).

The material excavated by Albright seemed to represent a nearly continuous sequence of occupation stretching over many centuries. Albright's interpretation of

the stratigraphy was based on the architectural remains, together with the numerous destruction levels that appeared to separate the periods of occupation clearly. Beyond this, however, there was little reference to the internal and external depositional layers of occupation debris that might or might not have related to the various buildings. The published section drawings from Tell Beit Mirsim illustrate this approach, showing architectural remains surrounded by undefined space.

Although the stratigraphic understanding was, in retrospect, not what one would expect of an archaeologist today, it was within the framework of successive destruction levels that Albright formulated a coherent typology and chronology of the pottery from the site, defining therefore periods of culture using the ceramic material, and developing a terminology far more appropriate to the material than had been used before. This had major implications for the development of Palestinian archaeology. Prior to Albright's excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim, the terminology of divisions of phases of settlement or culture used by scholars varied from person to person, and from site to site. One scholar might use the term 'Late Canaanite', another, 'Early Semitic', without a clear understanding of what, culturally or chronologically, the terminology was attempting to define. This obviously created problems for interpretation, and showed a lack of familiarity with the material on the part of the early archaeologists, for the simple reason that archaeological exploration in the region was still fairly new, and the material was therefore scattered, patchy, and unfamiliar.

Through systematic excavation and careful reading of the ceramic material, Albright developed a terminology that has formed the basis of chronological interpretation ever since, namely, the definition of broad cultural phases, based on the European 'Three Age' system, with Early Bronze Age (around 3000–1900 BC, by modern reckonings), Middle Bronze Age (around 1900–1540 BC), Late Bronze Age (around 1540–1120 BC), and Iron Age (around 1120–587/6 BC, the date of the start of the Neo-Babylonian period). Albright also laid down the foundations for the internal subdivisions of these phases, producing terms such as EB (Early Bronze) I, II, III, and IV; MB (Middle Bronze) IIA, B, and C; LB (Late Bronze) I, IIA, and IIB; and Iron Age I and II; and so on. While debate as to where the divisions should be applied in relation to the material remains an endless source of amusement for archaeologists, the framework and terminology are fundamentally Albright's, creating a unity of understanding within the subject and making it possible for proper and useful discourse and research to take place. For the first time all archaeologists of the region could recognize what it was they were agreeing or disagreeing about!

Among the remains excavated by Albright at Tell Beit Mirsim, the Middle Bronze Age levels (strata I to D) produced a number of buildings, structures, and artefacts. This was the period Albright came to associate with the Patriarchs of the Old Testament – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph – of whose existence in historical reality he was convinced.

One of these structures was the 'Patrician's House' (stratum D, MB IIB, about 1550 BC). This spacious and well-constructed villa (about 15 by 15 m) was built in the traditional Canaanite manner, employing sun-dried mud bricks for the superstructure on stone foundations. Floors and walls were coated with lime-plaster. The

house consisted of a large rectangular walled courtyard, open to the sky, with six smaller rooms adjoining one of its long sides, of which four were concentrated in a square in one corner. According to Albright, the rooms had a second storey, and while he does not produce substantive archaeological evidence for this, it is a reasonable suggestion given the scale of the plan and the quality of the construction. This was obviously the house of a person or a family of some wealth, and possibly importance.

Some of the contents of the 'Patrician's House' are worthy of mention, and confirm the residence as that of a notable individual or family: in particular, a broken limestone 'stela' depicting what Albright described as a 'serpent goddess', but which has subsequently been identified as a Canaanite dignitary. An ivory gaming board consisting of twenty squares and playing pieces also came from this house, together with a quantity of ceramic vessels (principally for storage), stone vessels, metal knives, jewellery, and scarabs. Although these finds seem rather mundane in comparison to some of the spectacular discoveries in Egypt and Mesopotamia, Tell Beit Mirsim became one of the most important excavated sites in Syro-Palestine, not because of its individual artefacts, but due to the methodology of Albright's approach. In this sense, he took archaeology a step further away from its treasure-seeking past, and revealed some of its true potential as an academic discipline.

Albright published the results of his excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim in four volumes of the *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (AASOR – see Bibliography for details). These reports represented for many years a breakthrough in archaeological excavation, recording, and publication. Although they may not be of the same standard as would be expected of today's archaeologists, the significant advance in methodology they represent is central to the modern discipline.

It must be remembered that Albright was not solely an archaeologist. Although he is often referred to as the greatest biblical archaeologist of all time, especially in the United States, his practical archaeological career as such was relatively brief. He was also a critical textual scholar, with a special interest in the historical and theological development of the monotheism of Judaism, and its literary traditions. As a literary scholar, Albright was keenly interested in the archaeological discoveries of textual clay tablets at ancient Mari on the Euphrates in eastern Syria (suggested by Albright to be Tell Hariri, an identification proved to be correct by excavation), Nuzi (Yorghan Tepe) in northern Iraq and Ugarit (Ras Shamra) on the Syrian coast. His particular interest in defining a cultural and historical setting for the Hebrew Bible led to his exploration of the light these extraordinary finds might shed on the biblical narratives. Albright, together with Mari's excavator, the French archaeologist André Parrot, interpreted the texts in such a way as to illuminate the world of the biblical Patriarchs in their journeys from Mesopotamia to the Levant. The linguistic importance of the tablet archives from Ras Shamra was, if anything, even more significant than the language of the Mari tablets. The close relationship between 'Ugaritic', as the language of the Ras Shamra archive became known, and the Hebrew of the Old Testament, in linguistic, grammatical, and literary terms, is undeniable, and, for Albright, they were a key in arguing for the authenticity of the early biblical narratives.

Whatever the final judgement on Albright as an archaeologist and ideologist, his

significant contribution to the field cannot be overlooked. His unflagging energy for research, study, and publication resulted in a maintenance and development of lasting interest in the area of biblical archaeology. The huge body of material he produced marks him out as one of the most energetic and scholarly figures not only in the history of biblical archaeology, but in the history of the study of the ancient Near East. He must be credited with providing a solid cornerstone from which the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem have gone from strength to strength, and for establishing an enduringly high-quality academic journal in *BASOR*. Finally, his most valuable contribution to the discipline of archaeology in the Levant itself is undoubtedly the chronological terminology he developed at his excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim, and which has become the subsequent basis of all archaeological chronological understanding in the region.

Albright's domination of the field of Near Eastern studies and archaeology in America led in part to the development there of 'biblical archaeology' as opposed to 'archaeology of the ancient Levant'. Under his influence and direct involvement, sites were chosen for excavation based primarily on their significance in the biblical texts, and Christian organizations were often targeted for funds and support. Field staff were frequently enlisted from seminaries, and included members of the clergy (or those studying for clerical degrees), and other biblical scholars. Therefore, the majority of those involved in American archaeology in Syro-Palestine at this time came from a primarily Christian (mainly Protestant) background, with this interest fundamental to their involvement in archaeological fieldwork. Apart from Albright's own excavations at Tell el-Fûl, Tell Beit Mirsim and Bethel, fieldwork conducted by other American archaeologists and biblical scholars (some of them Albright's students) during this period include Tell en-Nasbeh (F. Badé, Pacific School of Religion, 1926–35); Beth-Shemesh (E. Grant, Haverford College, Pennsylvania, 1928–33); Shechem (G. E. Wright, Drew-McCormick Expedition, seven seasons, 1956–1968); Ai (J. A. Callaway, ASOR, 1964–76); Gibeon (J. B. Pritchard, University of Pennsylvania, 1957–62); and Bab edh-Dhra' (P. Lapp, ASOR, 1965–7)

G. Ernest Wright (1909–1974)

One of Albright's protégés, G. Ernest Wright, was to become synonymous with developments in biblical archaeology and Christian religious thought in America in the 1950s. As a progression from the rebirth of Christian life in America in the 1920s, the 1950s saw theological thought develop into a form of orthodoxy or fundamentalism. It would appear that at this time, some American Christians felt the need to justify their faith with proof of the events, people, and places portrayed in the biblical narratives. A protagonist of this new direction, Wright made a direct link between faith, history, and developments in Syro-Palestinian archaeology. In this sense, biblical archaeology as typified by scholars like Wright was attempting to provide a service for which there was an increasingly large demand in clerical, scholarly, and lay populations throughout America.

George Ernest Wright was the son of a Presbyterian minister in Ohio. He was educated at the College of Wooster, whence he received his BA in 1931. He graduated as a Bachelor of Divinity in 1934 from the McCormick Theological Seminary,

going on to study under Albright at Johns Hopkins University. There, he specialized in the ceramics of the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, and Early Bronze Ages in the ancient Near East. Like Albright, he combined archaeological scholarship with textual studies, particularly the biblical texts and their theological content. He joined Albright on his excavations at Bethel in 1934, and developed a keen interest in the topographical study of the area, an interest that led to his conducting a survey of the region around the site.

Albright himself said of Wright that of all his students, it was he who understood best the principles and practice of the ceramic chronology and typology that had so recently been developed. Wright put these skills in pottery reading to good use in 1937, working with Elihu Grant of Haverford College to organize the ceramic material of 'Ain Shems/Beth Shemesh. In 1938 he became field secretary for ASOR, and launched the *Biblical Archaeologist*, a periodical designed to present Palestinian archaeology to a popular audience. He was the publications editor for twenty-five years, presenting many of his own articles, reviews, and editorials in its pages.

From 1939 to 1959 Wright taught the Hebrew Bible at McCormick Theological Seminary, and it was during this time that he cultivated an interest in social and environmental history to add to the more traditional avenues of research of the biblical scholar. This interdisciplinary approach in a traditional theological setting was a defining characteristic of Wright's own brand of scholarship, and is evident in three biblical monographs he published during his time at McCormick: *The Challenge of Israel's Faith* (1944), *The Old Testament against its Environment* (1950), and *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (1952).

The combination of the physical with the religious, and Wright's interest in the interface between the two, can be seen again in the *Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible* (1945), which he co-authored with the New Testament scholar Floyd V. Filson. However, for Wright, as with Albright before him, the physical was always in the service of the textual, whether this was theological or historical. Thus, as a subject that relies on physical evidence, archaeology was considered to be very much the servant of biblical history and theology, rather than a discipline and approach in its own right. Wright's perception of the relationship between the disciplines is apparent in many of his archaeological publications, notably *Biblical Archaeology* (1957), and *Shechem: The Biography of a Biblical City* (1965).

Wright's position in the academic community grew consistently throughout the 1950s, and in 1959 he was appointed to the Parkman Chair of Divinity at Harvard University, a position that reflected his influence in all fields of biblical scholarship in the United States at this time. In 1966 he was made president of ASOR, increasing his domination of the American scene still further.

Wright was an active field archaeologist, and conducted excavations that, as in the case of Albright's work at Tell Beit Mirsim, represented, in terms of methodology and technique, an advance on what had gone before. Together with Bernhard W. Anderson, Wright established the Drew-McCormick Expedition to Tell Balatah/Shechem (see below), conducting excavation seasons in 1956, 1957, 1960, 1962, 1964, 1966 and 1968. These excavations became a training ground for many of Wright's students, some of whom would direct excavations in their own right at sites such as Gezer, Heshbon (Hesban), Tell el-Hesi, Ta'anach, Caesarea, and Ai.

In 1964 he handed over the excavation of Shechem to his colleagues and, with Nelson Glueck (another of Albright's students), he began excavations at Gezer, which he staffed with his Harvard students. As with Shechem, the role of scientists and social scientists in archaeological excavation of Gezer was developed further, a trend he continued in the excavations at Idalion, in Cyprus (1971–4)

The excavations at Shechem provide an example of Wright's archaeological field-work in the context of biblical studies. The 6-acre mound of Tell Balatah, identified as the biblical Shechem, is situated in the hill country of north-central Israel, 10 km (6 miles) south-east of Samaria/Sebaste. The site occupies a strategically commanding position, controlling as it does the eastern entrance to a pass that runs transversely between the mountains of Ebal to the north and Gerizim to the south, and overlooks the Plain of Askar to the east.

The site was first formally investigated by the German scholar Ernst Sellin in a series of campaign seasons, interrupted by World War I, from 1913 to 1914, and again from 1926 to 1929 when he was joined by the architect Gabriel Welter, with a final season in 1934. Tragically, many of the field records and final reports from these excavations were destroyed in the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II.

The Drew–McCormick expedition, under the direction of Wright, set out to reinvestigate the site and the findings of the German expedition, employing a multidisciplinary methodology and sophisticated excavation techniques based largely on the highly refined stratigraphical approach demonstrated by Kathleen Kenyon in her excavations at Jericho and Jerusalem. Known as the 'Wheeler–Kenyon method', this system involved the excavation of squares, perhaps 4 or 5 metres in size, divided by unexcavated areas known as 'baulks' ('balks' in the USA), the purpose of which was to provide a record of the layers removed. Kenyon paid particular attention to the information in the baulks, concentrating on their maintenance (keeping them clean of dust, sharply cut and clearly labelled), and their detailed recording in the excavation notebooks, in drawings and in photographs. Relating the excavated material and finds to the strata visible in the unexcavated baulks enabled her to build up an enormously complex picture of the chronological development of the site, an archaeological time-line detailing every phase of human occupation excavated. This approach to excavation revolutionized digging in the Levant, making it possible to realize a level of stratigraphical and chronological control over the information that had previously been impossible.

G. Ernest Wright was one of the first archaeologists in the region to employ the Wheeler–Kenyon method, adapting it for the purposes of his excavations at Shechem. Twenty-four occupation strata were identified on the main tell (strata XXIV–I), dating from the Chalcolithic period (c. 3500 BC) through to the Maccabaeon period in the second century BC with the destruction of the city by John Hyrcanus in 107 BC.

Shechem was not occupied continuously throughout these millennia: several periods show an absence of occupation, most notably throughout the whole of the Early Bronze Age (third millennium BC).

Wright excavated much of significance at Shechem, such as massive defensive systems and walls from several periods, and numerous public buildings, including the so-called Fortress–Temple of El-Berith (named after the temple mentioned in the Bible – Judg. 9:4, 46), one of the first of its kind to be excavated in the Levant.

This structure belongs to a type now known as *migdal* (tower or fortress) temples, which were often closely associated physically with the defensive walls of the city, were very sturdily built, and were dedicated to warlike Canaanite gods such as Baal or El. They became common in the Middle Bronze Age IIC period (c. 1650–1550 BC), a time when many sites underwent massive fortification. Examples of these fortress–temples have been found or identified throughout the Levant: from Ebla in north-central Syria, and Byblos on the coast, through to the Canaanite heartland at sites like Hazor, Megiddo, and Shechem, and as far south as Tell ed-Dabʿa, the Hyksos capital in the Nile Delta in northern Egypt.

The structure identified by Wright as the Temple of El-Berith at Shechem consisted of two main building phases (1a and 2a), each with an intermediate phase (1b and 2b). Phases 1a and 1b (strata XVI–XV) cover the period of the Middle Bronze Age IIC. Wright and his team excavated a large, carefully constructed, and massively built structure, 26.3 m long by 21.2 m wide, with stone foundation walls more than 5 m in thickness. The thickness of the walls seemed to indicate a substantial mud-brick superstructure, perhaps with several storeys. The temple was orientated lengthways on a north-west to south-east axis, with two massive towers, both with stairwells at the south-eastern entrance. These towers flanked an entrance hall with a central column that led directly to the interior pillared hall or *cella*. An altar located in the forecourt was approached by a ramp.

During the second building phase (1b) of this temple the entrance was altered from a central-axis to a bent-axis access point, or dogleg approach, and two stelae were erected outside on either side of the entrance.

Roughly a century after Shechem's destruction at the hands of the Egyptians in the mid-sixteenth century BC, the city was rebuilt (now in the Late Bronze Age) and a new temple (strata XIII–XI, c. 1450–1125 BC; phases 2a and 2b) was erected on the site of the old *migdal* temple. This later structure, rather than that of the Middle Bronze Age, is more plausibly identified as the temple of Baal/El-Berith mentioned in the biblical texts.

The axis of the new temple was north–south, with the entrance located on one of the long walls, creating a typical Canaanite *broad-room* temple plan. The Late Bronze Age temple was not as large, or as well built as its predecessor, but the huge *masseba* (a biblical term for a sacred standing stone) erected in the courtyard, along with a stone altar, indicate the continued importance of the site as a religious centre.

G. Ernest Wright is generally acknowledged as a fine archaeologist who adopted with enthusiasm new stratigraphic excavation techniques and scientific methods. As with Albright before him, what distinguishes him as a biblical, as opposed to a Levantine, archaeologist was not so much his archaeological practice, but his *interpretation* of the excavated material. An assumption in his writing of the implicit historicity of the biblical narratives drove him to relate the excavated results to his understanding of the biblical stories. The historical existence of characters such as Abraham, Jacob and Moses was never questioned, and the narratives relating to them were seen as accurate historical accounts. In the foreword to *Shechem: The Biography of a Biblical City*, Wright expresses the view that for people seriously concerned with religious matters (those linked with the Bible), the historical nature of the Bible should be of the utmost importance. The historicity of the biblical narratives was

somehow directly linked to the validity of biblical religion and faith. In an attempt to counteract the challenge to the fundamental validity of the Bible, presented, for example, by the popular understanding and acceptance of evolutionary theory, clerics such as Wright employed the scholarly, even scientific, tools of historical and archaeological research to bring confirmation of historical truth as proof for people's faith. In this way, any demonstration of the historical reality of biblical events, places, and people would be seen as having a direct bearing on the reality of the Bible's spiritual and theological content. It is this direct conflation of archaeology and biblical theology that has become primarily associated with 'biblical archaeology' in its most specific (and perhaps, extreme) sense, and that has led many scholars to question the motives and rationales of those associated with biblical archaeology in even its broadest and most secular sense.

Wright was certainly motivated by the Bible in much of his work in the Levant. His interpretations of the archaeological evidence from sites such as Shechem do give great emphasis to the relationship with biblical tradition. However, as with Albright, the excavation process itself was well observed and well recorded, allowing other scholars considerable latitude to disagree objectively with Wright's own biblically focused interpretations.

American contemporaries of G. Ernest Wright

Wright was not the only student of Albright to achieve great things. Nelson Glueck (1900–71) was Albright's successor as director of ASOR in Jerusalem, and was responsible for the first systematic archaeological surveys of the Negev (see *Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev*, 1959) and Transjordan – published as *Explorations in Eastern Palestine* (1934–51). Glueck, too, was convinced of the underlying historical truth of the biblical narratives, but did not support the notion that this was somehow proof of the Bible's theological and spiritual content. He saw the two as separate issues, a view he expressed in the journal *Biblical Archaeologist* (1959: 106).

Another of Albright's students to make a major contribution to Palestinian archaeology was J. B. Pritchard (1910–97), Professor of Religious Thought and director of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. Like Wright, he was a keen exponent of the Wheeler–Kenyon method. He excavated several sites on both sides of the Jordan River, including Herodian Jericho in 1951 (Tulul Abu el-^cAlaiq), Gibeon (el-Jib) from 1956 to 1962, and Tell es-Sa'idiyeh from 1964 to 1967. After the 1967 Arab–Israeli war, Pritchard excavated the Phoenician city of Sarepta on the Lebanese coast. All of the results of these excavations have been fully, and objectively published. Like Albright, Pritchard was a fine textual scholar as well as an archaeologist. His seminal edited work *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (1969) remains a key source book today. Like others, Pritchard was very much concerned with biblical studies, but by no means exclusively so. El-Jib has been positively identified as biblical Gibeon, and Tell es-Sa'idiyeh may be biblical Zarethan. But neither Tell es-Sa'idiyeh nor Sarepta are major biblical sites.

The foundation of the State of Israel, Yigael Yadin (1917–1984) and Israeli biblical archaeology

If Albright and his disciples have been fundamental to the development of biblical archaeology from an American and Protestant Christian tradition, there have certainly been other contributors from different religious and ideological backgrounds, the most influential of whom must surely be the Israeli school of archaeologists. Since the birth in 1948 of the modern State of Israel, Israeli archaeologists have brought their own perspectives to the field, creating an alternative definition of biblical archaeology, or, as many Israeli archaeologists prefer, the archaeology of Eretz-Israel (the Land of Israel). For many Israeli archaeologists, particularly in the early days of the modern State, the archaeology of their new country was of fundamental importance in establishing their identity. Unlike the Albrightian School this was neither a religious nor a theological position, but a social and political one; and indeed, much of Israeli archaeology was refreshingly secular from the outset.

Yigael Yadin (born Yigael Sukenik) can be regarded as the father of Israeli biblical archaeology. Very much a child of the Zionist movement which culminated in the creation of the modern State of Israel, Yadin was a scholar, soldier, politician, and hero of Israel. During the 1930s and 1940s his academic studies in archaeology were interrupted by his joining the Haganah, the Zionist underground. He became chief of operations at the outbreak of the Arab–Israeli war of 1948. It is here that he acquired the code-name ‘Yadin’ (‘he will judge’, Gen. 49:16), which he later adopted as his surname. In 1949 Yadin became chief of staff of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF).

Yadin’s academic career took precedence after his retirement from military life. In 1955 he completed his PhD thesis on the Qumran ‘Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness’, and joined the staff of the Hebrew University. Almost immediately he began the excavations at the major Canaanite and Israelite site of Hazor in Upper Galilee, directing the James A. de Rothschild Expedition. Excavations continued until 1958, and were to become the ‘flagship’ of Israeli archaeology. Vast quantities of material from the Bronze and Iron Ages were uncovered, including the Late Bronze Age destruction levels that Yadin associated with a unified Israelite conquest of Canaan under Joshua in about 1250 BC. This association has since been questioned, both in terms of date, and in terms of the cause of the city’s destruction. The significance of Yadin’s excavations at Hazor lay in the architectural stratigraphic approach he developed with the expedition’s architect Immanuel Dunayevsky, the active way in which he solicited funding for the expedition, and the use of Hazor as a training excavation for a new generation of Israeli field archaeologists.

Yadin’s most famous archaeological excavations were at Masada (1963–5), the cliff-top palace of Herod the Great, and the scene of the Zealots’ famous stand against Rome, which ended in AD 74 with the suicide of the Jewish defenders. The excavation of the extraordinary Herodian palaces, the administrative and textual material, and the skeletons, apparently those of the ill-fated Zealots, caused much discussion in scholarly and popular circles, and made both Masada and Yigael Yadin household names.

Other excavations include the expeditions to the Judean Desert, particularly in the area of Nahal Hever, which revealed many artefacts and contemporary documents relating to the Bar Kokhba Revolt, including military dispatches and legal documents left by the refugees.

During the Arab–Israeli war of 1967 Yadin served as security adviser to the Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol. He obtained IDF assistance in confiscating and ultimately purchasing an illegally removed ancient scroll, which he named the *Temple Scroll*. The material it contained related to the religious law, or halakhah of the Qumran Essenes.

After the 1973 Arab–Israeli war, Yadin entered public life, eventually becoming deputy prime minister of Israel in the Begin administration from 1977 to 1981. He returned to academic life in 1981, and remained an active archaeologist and textual scholar until his sudden death in 1984.

Like Albright, Yadin was both an archaeologist and a textual scholar, commanding a wide range of material. In one sense his interests were quite wide, ranging from discussions on the archaeological evidence for warfare, through to the transcription of religious textual material. In another sense, however, Yadin focused his attention primarily on material, both textual and archaeological, that appeared to relate in some way to previous periods of Hebrew nationalistic struggle, such as the biblical Conquest, the Maccabean Revolt of the second century BC, the First Jewish War (AD 66–74) and the Bar Kokhba Revolt (AD 132–5).

Certainly from Yadin's perspective, the identity of modern Israel was connected directly to the Jewish people's biblical and revolutionary past. This was not so much a religious as a nationalistic perspective. It was not the religious identity of the Jewish people that was of concern to Yadin, but their national identity: their laws, customs, and history (as expressed in the Bible) were seen as being of fundamental importance to the development of the identity and character of the modern State of Israel. Archaeology and biblical studies were highly effective and emotive tools in the realization and articulation of this past identity.

As the pioneer of the Israeli school of archaeology, and as a most significant political and military leader in the new Israeli State, Yadin's position was at the extreme end of what was to characterize Israeli archaeology in the future. His own students very quickly distanced themselves from his overtly nationalistic approach, adopting less political language and objectives, and Israeli archaeologists in general, have subsequently acquired a reputation for objectivity and clarity of purpose, and have made a significant contribution to Syro-Palestinian archaeology and to the advancement of the subject as a whole.

1970s–1980s, and to the present day

By the 1970s the interpretative position of biblical archaeology as typified by the work of Albright and Wright was beginning to be undermined by developments within Syro-Palestinian archaeology itself, and other branches of academia and science. Israeli archaeologists had begun to make significant contributions to the archaeology of the Levant, within their own territory. Together with the Americans, they now represent the largest group of archaeologists working in the field in Israel

itself. Since the mid-1960s there have been a great number of Israeli and American excavations, many of which are ongoing. These include Gezer (William G. Dever, Joe D. Seger and others, 1964–74, 1984, and 1990); Tell el-Hesi (Lawrence E. Stager, John E. Worrell and others, 1971–83); Sepphoris (Eric M. Meyers and Carol Meyers, 1970–81, and James F. Strange, 1984–); Lahav (Joe D. Seger and Dan P. Cole, 1976–); Tel Miqne-Ekron (Seymour Gitin and Trude Dothan 1981–); Ashkelon (Lawrence E. Stager and others 1985–); Caesarea (Robert J. Bull and Lawrence E. Toombs, 1971–); Tel Anafa (Saul S. Weinberg and Sharon Herbert, 1968–81); Tel Jemmeh (Gus Van Beek, 1970–82).

More recent American and Israeli archaeologists have employed the stratigraphic techniques of the Wheeler–Kenyon method and have adapted them to the individual needs of their own excavations. Following the example of Wright’s excavations, there has been an increasing use of professionals and students with specific expertise, such as human and animal bone specialists, archaeobotanists, geophysicists, technology specialists, and so on, depending on the nature of the excavated material.

The involvement of professionals from less Bible-orientated backgrounds has had the effect of ‘secularizing’ the subject somewhat, providing new emphases in excavation strategies, and in the final published reports, not just in terms of content, but in terms of approach.

In many respects, this natural evolution in Syro-Palestinian archaeology (as well as in other areas of archaeology) towards a more scientific approach to the material, initially mirrored the so-called ‘New Archaeology’ in the USA, a theoretical development which followed anthropological models looking at ‘cultures’ rather than ‘history’. The ‘New Archaeology’ emphasized the scientific, was multidisciplinary, and, as was the case with the sciences, required a clear ‘mission statement’ on the part of the researchers and excavators outlining their method, and their project’s purpose.

Since the 1980s, however, the emphasis in archaeology in general, including Syro-Palestinian archaeology, has changed somewhat. Today Syro-Palestinian archaeologists tend to pay greater attention to the historical and textual material, which forms a significant part of the material culture of the ancient Levant, than the New Archaeology models would have allowed them to do. Nevertheless, the contribution of scientific expertise and technology to Syro-Palestinian archaeology has grown consistently since the end of World War II, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and continues to do so.

Greater attention to detail requires longer excavation projects, and longer publication times. Specialist equipment can be prohibitively expensive. The growing cost of archaeological excavation has undoubtedly led to the increased deployment of large numbers of student volunteers, often willing to support themselves in order to gain access to the academic stage. Such students do not necessarily come from religious colleges, seminaries, or departments of biblical studies or even archaeology, but from such diverse academic backgrounds that their presence has been a further factor in the secularization of American Syro-Palestinian archaeology.

With this broadening of the source of staff for excavation projects it is hardly surprising that the range of issues raised by the archaeological data, and indeed the nature of the questions for which resolution is sought, has similarly broadened,

causing a shift in the discipline away from a bibliocentric perspective. Issues such as demography, trade, or agricultural practices, have become valid areas of research in their own rights, and not because they could necessarily illuminate the world of the Bible. In this respect Syro-Palestinian archaeology has begun to achieve a new balance, as has existed in other geographical regions for some time.

The Americans and Israelis have never been and are still not, of course, the only nations conducting active fieldwork in Syro-Palestine. The British and Europeans too have continued to excavate sites and conduct fieldwork and research in the area. Many of these projects have been in Arab countries, primarily Jordan and Syria, and to a lesser extent, perhaps, in Lebanon. Since the 1970s the most significant British excavations include Tell Nebi Mend (Qadesh), Syria (P. J. Parr, Institute of Archaeology, University of London, 1975–); Tell Iktanu, Jordan (K. Prag, University of Manchester, 1987, 1989, 1990); and Tell es-Sa'idiyeh, Jordan (J. N. Tubb, British Museum, 1985–).

Other European projects of note include the Italian excavations at Tell Mardikh (Ebla) and Tell Meskene (Emar) in Syria, the continuing French involvement with Ras Shamra (Ugarit) in Syria and their excavations at Tel Yarmut in Israel, the German excavations at Tel Masos (Israel), and the Dutch excavations at Tell Deir 'Alla in Jordan.

Arab scholars, too, have added a vigorous new element to Syro-Palestinian archaeology. National schools were established during the 1960s after the creation of the independent Arab states. Overall, and understandably, they have tended to avoid both biblical studies, with the implicit connections to the nationhood of Israel and Israel's ancient history, as well as the search for Western cultural and theological roots in the Holy Land, and instead have concentrated on their own perspectives, which have generally, although by no means exclusively, been orientated towards Islamic archaeology. As such, nationalistically or religiously motivated concerns have on occasion provided a focus for research, but this tendency has, in recent years been less pronounced, with a general broadening of the scope of research to embrace all of the cultures represented within their borders.

Since the Peace Agreement of 1996 a long-awaited period of academic exchange between Israel and the Arab world has begun to be possible. Israeli and Jordanian archaeologists have for the first time in many years been able to visit each other's countries and archaeological sites, to invite each other to conferences and to embark upon joint projects and publications. Developments such as these may well move the archaeology of the region still further away from nationalistic concerns towards a more reasonable and meaningful academic dialogue.

At the present time Syro-Palestinian archaeology encompasses many different areas of specialization, including certainly those areas concerned in one way or another with the Bible. Biblical archaeology, defined as the archaeology of sites associated with the Bible, clearly forms a large element of the modern discipline. The Bible is, and always will be, a major textual product of the region, and as such it is not, nor should it be, ignored. However, other aspects of scholarship have come to be seen to be as important for an understanding of the region's past as biblical studies. Biblical archaeology, therefore, in the sense defined above, has become more relaxed. Links between archaeology and the biblical texts are no longer sought out to the

same degree, but are accepted where they occur. In no way does the modern discipline of biblical archaeology attempt to 'prove' the Bible as might have been the case during the days of Albright and Wright. In these terms biblical archaeology no longer represents an ideological position, but instead can be seen as an area of interest or specialization as valid as any other.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

PALESTINE DURING THE BRONZE AGE



J. Maxwell Miller

BEFORE THE BRONZE AGE (PREHISTORIC TIMES)

The origins of the human species are hidden in the distant past, and most of our existence on the earth falls within what historians traditionally have called ‘prehistoric times’ – that is, within the long silent millennia before humans learned to write. Paleontologists and archeologists can chart some of the important developments that occurred during prehistoric times. It appears, for example, that humans mastered the use of fire some 400,000 years ago. *Homo sapiens sapiens*, the subspecies to which modern humans belong, began to appear on the scene approximately 100,000 years ago. The Pleistocene epoch (popularly known as ‘the Ice Age’) drew to a close approximately 16,000 years ago. There followed, approximately 10,000 years ago, the ‘Neolithic revolution.’ The latter was characterized by early forms of agriculture, domesticated animals and small permanent settlements (i.e., the earliest villages). Palestine¹ shared in these prehistoric developments and offers some important prehistoric sites. Especially noteworthy are the Nahal ‘Amud caves and the Qafzeh cave representing the Middle Paleolithic Age, the Mount Carmel caves representing Middle and Upper Paleolithic, and Tell es-Sultan (Jericho) one of the early Neolithic villages.²

Geologists and archeologists employ different but overlapping chronological schemes for dealing with prehistoric times. Geologists, attentive to gradual changes in the physical features of the earth’s surface and to the fossil record of all life forms, divide time into four major eras, which they subdivide then into epochs. Archeologists, on the other hand, more attentive to developments in human material culture and thus concerned with only the latest epochs of geological time, recognize four major prehistoric ages: Paleolithic (‘Old Stone’), Epi-Paleolithic (sometimes called Mesolithic or ‘Middle Stone’), Neolithic (‘New Stone’), and Chalcolithic (‘Copper–Stone’).³ As will be apparent from [Figure 21.1](#), the Paleolithic and Epi-Paleolithic Ages fall chronologically within the geologists’ Pleistocene epoch, while the Neolithic and Chalcolithic Ages take us into the Holocene epoch.

The dates indicated in [Figure 21.1](#) should be understood as broad approximations for geological and archeological changes that will have occurred gradually over the

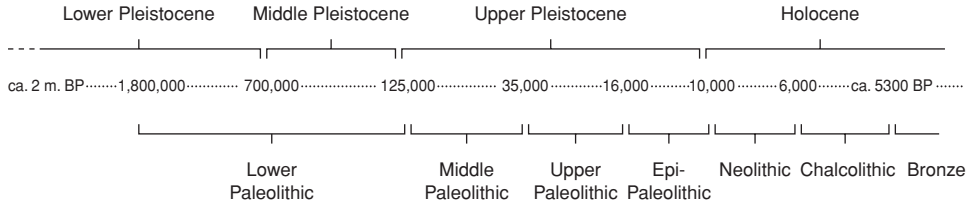


Figure 21.1 Comparison of geological and archeological chronologies.

millennia. Keep in mind also that the changes in human culture to which the archeological dates refer did not occur everywhere at the same time. The dates given for the Chalcolithic and Bronze Ages pertain specifically to developments in Palestine. Note that Chalcolithic covers approximately the sixth millennium BP ('before the present'), which would be the fourth millennium BC (or BCE, 'before the common era'). This millennium saw striking innovations in human society, such as the beginnings of metallurgy, and set the stage for the even more spectacular developments of the subsequent Bronze Age. Palestine's Chalcolithic Age corresponds roughly to Egypt's early Predynastic Period (Naqada I and II), and to the Halaf, 'Ubaid and Uruk Periods in Mesopotamia.

THE FIRST THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF RECORDED HISTORY (BRONZE AND IRON AGES)

By the closing centuries of the fourth millennium BCE urban centers large enough to be regarded as cities were emerging in the Middle East, especially in the Nile, Euphrates, and Tigris River valleys. The earliest known experimentation with writing occurred about the same time, and these two developments signaled that humankind was entering a new phase of existence. Other features of the new phase included the rise of urban-centered political and religious structures, the accumulation of wealth, and occupational diversity (rulers, scribes, priests, craftsmen, and so on). Urban society would flourish during some periods and decline during others over the next three thousand years that composed the Bronze and Iron Ages, and in fact most of the population probably continued to live in small villages and hamlets or to follow a nomadic existence. Most of our information for this first three thousand years of recorded history derives from and pertains to the cities, however, and the cities naturally dominated the surrounding villages and hamlets.

Cities located in especially favorable agricultural settings, on important trade routes, and blessed with easily defendable positions grew particularly strong. The resulting 'city-states' often went to war with each other, which called for fortifications, and occasionally a city would manage to extend its authority far afield. Among the cities that became seats of extended kingdoms or empires at one time or another during this first three thousand years of recorded history were Memphis and Thebes in the Nile River valley, Qatna and Aleppo in the Levant, Hattusha in central Anatolia, and Ur, Babylon, Assur, and Mari in the Mesopotamian valley. Among

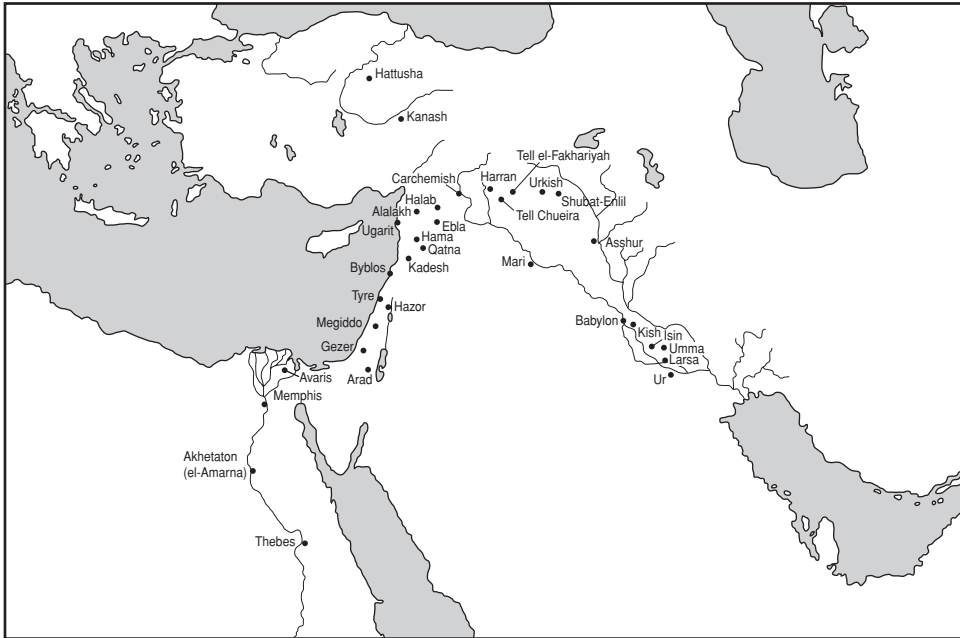


Figure 21.2 Map – Bronze Age cities in the ancient Middle East.

the ancient empires that emerged from these cities were Egypt's Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, Hammurabi's Babylonian empire, and the later Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Persian empires. Alexander's conquest of the East in 334–323 BCE represents another major watershed in Middle Eastern history. For approximately the next thousand years after Alexander, the Middle East would be dominated politically by Greek- and Latin-speaking peoples and be heavily influenced by their cultural traditions.

The written materials available from this first three thousand years of recorded history are in different languages (principally Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, Hittite, Canaanite, and Aramaic) and of various sorts (royal inscriptions and correspondence, temple records, domestic and commercial documents, literary compositions including mythical and religious texts, tomb inscriptions, seals, seal impressions, and so on). Particularly useful for the historian's purposes are royal archives discovered by archaeologists among the ruins of several key cities. Unfortunately the available written materials tend to be sporadic and uneven in coverage. Thus historical developments in some areas and during certain periods are fairly well documented, while other areas and periods remain largely unknown. Most of the surviving written materials from the first three millennia of recorded history in the Middle East derive from Egypt and Mesopotamia, for example, with Syria and Anatolia somewhat less well represented, and Palestine hardly represented at all. Notable exceptions for Syria are the archives discovered at Ebla (Tell Mardikh), Mari (Tell Hariri), and Ugarit (Ras Shamra).

One might think of Palestine as a land bridge connecting Syria, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia with Africa and Arabia. The peoples of Palestine often were caught up in international conflicts, therefore, and were influenced culturally from different directions. The strongest cultural ties (language, architectural and ceramic styles, religious imagery, and so on) were with Syria and Mesopotamia. Palestine lay more within Egypt's zone of political influence during the Bronze Age, however, and consequently most of the available written information pertaining specifically to Palestine during the Bronze Age comes from Egyptian sources.

Because even the Egyptian sources provide very limited information about Palestine, and there is virtually no written evidence available from Palestine itself during the Bronze Age, historians must depend heavily upon what can be learned from silent archeological remains. Here again, the most spectacular remains from the Bronze and Iron Ages are to be seen in Egypt and Mesopotamia (such as the pyramids and ziggurats). Perhaps the most characteristic archeological feature from these three millennia, however, are the stratified city ruins or 'tells' ('tel' in Hebrew) scattered throughout the Middle East. Generally the Palestinian tells are of more modest size than those of Syria and Mesopotamia. This is indicative of the fact that Palestine, offering less favorable agricultural conditions and being less strategically situated with respect to important trade routes, was marginal to the major urban centers of the ancient world. It was a region of modest cities, villages and small hamlets.

Archeologists divide the first three millennia of urban civilization in Palestine into four major ages: Early Bronze Age (ca. 3300–2000 BCE), Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2000–1550 BCE), Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550–1200), and Iron Age (ca. 1200–323 BCE). Israeli archeologists sometimes use the rubrics Canaanite Period and Israelite Period for the Bronze Age and Iron Age respectively. Archeologists working in Syria generally prefer the rubrics Old Syrian Period, Middle Syrian Period, and New Syrian Period for archeological phases that correspond roughly to the Middle Bronze, Late Bronze, and Iron Ages respectively.

As explained above, archeological chronology and terminology have to do with trends in material culture; and these trends, besides occurring gradually over time, involved other features in addition to metal technology. Thus the names 'Bronze Age' and 'Iron Age' should not be taken too literally, and the dates assigned by archeologists to these ages and their subphases are only approximations. When assigning dates, moreover, archeologists usually depend heavily on written sources – that is, they attempt to coordinate trends observed in the material culture with historical periods as reconstructed from written sources. This is not always a simple matter. The written evidence itself often is unclear for one thing, and human history does not divide easily into discrete periods. Not surprisingly, therefore, archeologists sometimes disagree on the dates they assign to archeological periods. In fact, all dates for the first two and a half millennia of recorded history, even those calculated by historians from written sources, are uncertain to some degree.⁴

Note in [Figure 21.3](#) that the Bronze Age as a whole (Early, Middle, and Late Bronze combined) represents approximately the first two thousand years of recorded history, and that the Iron Age represents approximately the next thousand years. Ancient Israel enters the picture at the end of the Bronze Age as we shall see, and

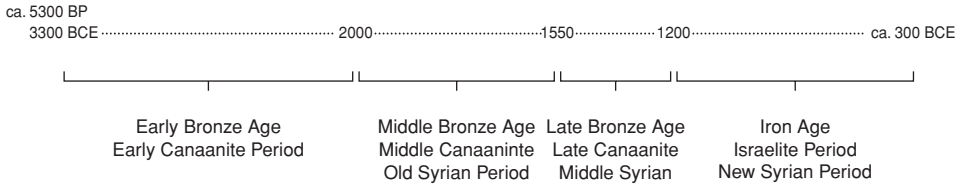


Figure 21.3 The Bronze and Iron Ages in Syria–Palestine.

Israel’s history unfolded during the Iron Age. Accordingly, the Israelites were heirs of Bronze Age civilization rather than participants in it.

THE EARLY BRONZE AGE (ca. 3300–2000 BCE)

The dates given above for the Early Bronze Age include a period at the end (ca. 2300/2250–2000 BCE) that in some aspects represents a continuation of Early Bronze but probably should be thought of as a separate interim period between the Early Bronze and Middle Bronze Ages. Thus Palestine’s Early Bronze Age proper, excluding the interim period, spanned almost a thousand years. It overlaps Egypt’s Early Dynastic (or Archaic) and Old Kingdom Periods. In Mesopotamia, this was the time of the early Sumerian city-states. Written records from Egypt and southern Mesopotamia enable historians to reconstruct the overall contours of historical developments in those two areas, and the Ebla archive allows us to look in briefly on a major city-state that flourished in western Syria. Palestine, however, is essentially beyond the horizon of written sources during the Early Bronze Age (see [Figure 21.4](#)⁵).

Excavations at Palestinian tells indicate that villages began to emerge in the land on the eve of the third millennium BCE; some of them grew into cities that flourished for several centuries (not always simultaneously or without interruptions); and then, after about 2300 BCE, the cities began to decline, and in most cases disappeared. Archeologists recognize four subphases of the Early Bronze Age: Early Bronze I (ca. 3300–3050 BCE), Early Bronze II (ca. 3050–2700 BCE), Early Bronze III (ca. 2700–2300 BCE), and the interim period at the end (ca. 2300/2250–2000 BCE) during which the cities disappeared.⁶

Early Bronze I (ca. 3300–3050 BCE)

EB I was a proto-urban period with village settlements based on Mediterranean economy – sheep and goat herding, olive, vine, and fruit trees – beginning to appear in the Palestinian highlands and inner valleys. This represented a demographic shift, most of the small camps and settlements of the Chalcolithic Age having been situated in the agriculturally marginal steppes and arid zones. Some of the villages grew to be respectable towns during EB I, but it is doubtful that any of them could be regarded as cities. Most if not all remained unfortified, for example, and modest temples seem to have been the only public buildings. Sumerian cities (Eridu, ‘Ubaid,

- Pyramid and tomb texts (in hieroglyphics) from Egypt, especially from the vicinity of ancient Memphis.
- Sumerian texts (cuneiform on clay tablets) from the Sumerian city-states in southern Mesopotamia (Nippur, Lagash, Ur, Erech, Larsa, Shurruk, Isin). It was the Sumerians who first developed cuneiform writing. Their writings include administrative documents, letters, myths, and so on.
- Akkadian texts (cuneiform on clay tablets) from cities situated in the vicinity of Baghdad (Kish, Babylon, Eshnunna). These are similar in content to the Sumerian texts, but Akkadian is a different language, a Semitic language, for which the cuneiform method of writing was adapted.
- Ebla archive (cuneiform on clay tablets) discovered in 1974–5 at Tell Mardikh approximately 40 miles south of Aleppo. The Ebla texts are mostly royal administrative documents covering approximately 40 years prior to a destruction of the city ca. 2300 BCE. Eblite was an early Semitic language akin to both Akkadian and Canaanite.

Figure 21.4 Important literary sources from the Early Bronze Age.

Ur, Uruk, Nippur, Lagash, Umma) were emerging in southern Mesopotamia at the same time – that is EB I corresponds roughly to the Uruk IV–Jemdet Nasr (Early Sumerian) period in southern Mesopotamia. Settlements were appearing in Syria as well. Some of them, such as Habiba-Kabira, may have been Sumerian colonies. One would expect Mesopotamian and Syrian influences on Palestine during EB I, and this is confirmed by the material culture associated with Palestine’s EB I settlements (some of the pottery forms for example, and the appearance of cylinder seals). In southern Palestine, however, the closest ties were with Egypt. This is indicated by numerous small finds, especially seal impressions of Egyptian officials and *serekhs* (a pharaoh’s name inscribed within a rectangular border). Two *serekhs*, one from Arad (Tell Arad) and the other from Tel Erani,⁷ identify Narmer, the first pharaoh of Dynasty I. Thus it can be established that EB I overlapped chronologically the [first part](#) of Egypt’s Early Dynastic Period.

Early Bronze II (ca. 3050–2700)

By the early centuries of the third millennium BCE urbanization was intensifying throughout the Fertile Crescent. The Sumerian cities were in their Early Dynastic Period (Early Dynastic I) for example, and Memphis was emerging under the pharaohs of Dynasties I and II as the capital of a unified Egypt. Palestine, no doubt stimulated and influenced from both directions, participated in the trend. We may now speak of proper cities in Palestine with fortifications and public buildings, although these were modest cities compared to those of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Syria. Most of Palestine’s population probably continued to live apart from the cities, either in surrounding hamlets or as seminomads. There are indications that the cities



Figure 21.5 Map – Bronze Age sites in Palestine (all of them were not necessarily occupied at the same time).



Figure 21.6 Excavations under way at Et-Tell. Photo J. Maxwell Miller.

were destroyed from time to time during the course of EB II – probably the result of local warfare.

Among the settlements that emerged as fortified cities during EB II were some that would figure prominently, off and on, throughout the remainder of the Bronze and Iron Ages: Hazor (Tell el-Qadeh), Beth-Shan (Tell el-Husn), Megiddo (Tell el-Mutesellim), Jericho (Tell es-Sultan), Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir), and others. Abydos ware, discovered first in Egypt (late Dynasty I contexts) but probably originating in Syria–Palestine, serves as a chronological cross-reference with Egypt and likewise counts as evidence of continued contact between Egypt and Palestine during EB II. Also from this period archeologists have discovered what appear to be caravan way stations along the route between Egypt and southern Palestine.

Three sites that have been particularly important for understanding EB II are Tell el-Far'ah and 'Ai (et-Tell) in the north-central hill country, and Arad between Beersheba and the Dead Sea. Because much of Arad's 25-acre site was not reoccupied during later periods and the EB II remains thus lay immediately beneath the surface of the ground, excavators were able to expose a large portion of the city plan. The city was surrounded by a massive stone wall (2 to 2.5 m thick) strengthened at intervals with round towers. At the center of the city was a water catchment system and deep reservoir. The domestic houses, also of stone (at least the lower courses), were rectangular and entered by a door on the broad side. At the door, one stepped down from ground level into the broad room. Typically there was a bench



Figure 21.7 Foundations of an Early Bronze II house at Tel 'Arad (ancient Arad).
Photo J. Maxwell Miller.

surrounding the room at the base of its walls. Larger structures, which the excavators interpreted as a palace and two sets of 'twin temples,' followed similar plans.

Early Bronze III (ca. 2700–2300 BCE)

The beginning of EB III is marked by the appearance of a distinctive new pottery style, Khirbet Kerak ware, but there was no break or sudden change in the material culture. Basically it may be said that Palestine's Early Bronze Age phase of urbanization that had begun during EB I reached its zenith in EB III. Some of the EB II cities were abandoned (such as Tell el-Far'ah North and Arad), other new settlements were founded (such as Beth-Shemesh and Numeira), and on the whole there may have been somewhat fewer cities in EB III than in EB II. But those that flourished during EB III tended to be larger and to present more impressive architecture than their predecessors. Among the largest were Beth-Yerah (over 50 acres), Yarmuth (40 a.), Tell el-Hesi and 'Ai (both about 25 a.). Other settlements reached 10 to 15 acres, but most were still smaller.⁸ Palestine's urban population at the time may have reached 150,000.⁹ The main public buildings were temples, some of them rather impressive (e.g., at Megiddo, 'Ai and Yarmuth). In Palestine, no doubt, as in the contemporary Sumerian cities of southern Mesopotamia, the temples were at the center of economic and political power.

Southern Mesopotamia, now in its Early Dynastic II and III Periods, was intensely urbanized. It has been estimated that more than 80 percent of the population lived in and around the cities.¹⁰ Kish had emerged as the dominant Sumerian city by Early Dynastic II, and Lugalzagesi from Umma was a powerful ruler at the close of Early Dynastic III. Semitic names, first for scribes and then for rulers, turn up increasingly in the Sumerian documents during these two periods, and there is also some representation of the Akkadian language. Syria likewise experienced a period of rich urban development during EB III, cities in the upper Euphrates region having



Figure 21.8 Early Bronze III altar at Megiddo (upper right-hand).
Photo J. Maxwell Miller.

developed a dry farming agriculture paralleling the irrigation methods of southern Mesopotamia. Representative Syrian cites of this period are Mari (Tell Hariri), Tell Taya, Shubat-Enlil (Tell Leilan), Tell Chuiera, and especially Ebla (Tell Mardikh).¹¹

Ebla, which emerged as a regional power in western Syria near the end of EB III, is particularly important for our understanding of the period because of the more than 1,700 cuneiform documents discovered there. These documents cover a span of about 40 years and pertain mostly to the reigns of two Eblite kings, Irkab-Damu and Ishtar-Damu.¹² We learn that Ebla exerted political and commercial influence as far south as Hama on the Orontes River, north to the vicinity of Carchemish on the Euphrates, and even east of the Euphrates where Ebla's interests conflicted with

those of Mari. Although none of the Palestinian cities was comparable in size to Ebla, and Palestine is beyond the horizon of the Ebla documents, we may suppose that the sociopolitical circumstances reflected in these documents will have existed in Palestine as well – that is, cities ruled by local dynasties, some of them able to exert regional power.

Egypt meanwhile had entered its Old Kingdom Period, during which the pharaohs of Dynasties III and IV constructed the famous pyramids of Sakkara, Dashur, and Giza. During the Old Kingdom, Egypt established maritime relations with cities along the Levantine coast further north than Palestine, especially with Byblos. This probably explains why Egyptian artifacts largely disappear from Palestine during EB III; Egyptian commerce was bypassing Palestine.

From Early Bronze to Middle Bronze (ca. 2300/2250–2000 BCE)

Palestinian cities began to decline and disappear after about 2350 BCE, until virtually all of the population seems to have reverted to a nonurban lifestyle. This situation was to continue until about 2000 BCE, the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, when cities gradually begin to reemerge. Archeologists have not been able to agree on what to call this nonurban period between Early Bronze and Middle Bronze. Some, noting a degree of continuity between the pottery of this period and that of the preceding Early Bronze III, prefer to call it Early Bronze IV. Others, more impressed with characteristics that seem to anticipate the Middle Bronze Age prefer to call it (or at least the latter part of it) Middle Bronze I. Still others search for terminology that labels it as a truly interim period – ‘Intermediate Early Bronze/Middle Bronze’ or simply ‘Intermediate Bronze Age.’

The cause of the breakdown and decline in city life at the end of EB III is unclear. Earlier archeologists generally attributed it to turmoil created by population movements, and a popular theory supposed Amorite migrations (see below). There was a related theory that Abraham and his family entered Palestine in connection with the Amorite movements. But neither of these theories has much following today. Contemporary archeologists tend to think more in terms of internal sociopolitical developments or of climatic factors. For example, long periods of drought could have destroyed the agricultural economy that supported the EB II–III cities. Whatever the cause, the urban decline were not limited to Palestine. Egypt also entered a phase of decentralization and urban decline at this time – that is, the First Intermediate Period. Egypt’s First Intermediate Period generally is understood to begin with Dynasty VII (ca. 2170–2131), but the decline set in already under the pharaohs of Dynasty VI (ca. 2350–2170). At least one of the Dynasty VI pharaohs, Pepi I (ca. 2332–2283), is known to have conducted a military campaign into Syria–Palestine.

Mesopotamia, meanwhile, entered its Akkadian period (ca. 2350–2193 BCE) associated with Sargon and his descendants. Sargon rose to power in Kish, established a new capital at Agade (location still unknown) and began the conquest of an extensive empire. His grandson, Naram-Sin, extended the realm still further. They spoke a Semitic language that has come to be called Akkadian (after the name of their capital city Agad). Gutian invasions contributed to the collapse of Akkadian hege-

mony, after which the Gudians dominated southern Mesopotamia for approximately a half century. This was followed by a brief Sumerian revival centered at Ur under a dynasty founded by Ur-Nammu (Ur Dynasty III; ca. 2112–2004). Probably it was either Sargon or Naram-Sin that destroyed Ebla about 2350 BCE. Ebla was rebuilt and continued on as an important city, but overshadowed by the kingdoms of Yamkhad centered at Halab (Aleppo) and Qatna (Tell Mishrifeh), east of present-day Homs. Palestine would have been hinterland to these strong Syrian cities.

There continued to be some small settlements in Palestine during the Interim Period. Because these were such small settlements, however, and usually one-period sites that did not produce conspicuous tells, they are difficult to find. Much of our information comes from isolated cemeteries, moreover, and from what appear to be seminomadic settlements situated in areas marginal to the agricultural lands that had supported the EB cities and towns. Many such settlements have been found in the Jordan Valley, for example, and in the central Negeb. Possibly the Negeb settlements belonged to pastoralists who ranged annually with their flocks between the southern hill country, the Shephelah, and the Negeb. The typical pottery from this Interim Period represents a departure from EB traditions. Exceptional to all of the above, however, are a few sites in the region east and northeast of the Dead Sea (Iktanu, Khirbet Iskander, 'Aroer). Although quite small, these Transjordanian settlements continued EB III pottery traditions and one of them (Iskander) was fortified. Some archeologists see these Transjordanian settlements as atypical of the Interim Period, apparently surviving remnants of the EB III urban population.¹³ Others think that they may have been more characteristic of the Interim Period, and accordingly prefer to call the period EB IV.¹⁴

THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE (ca. 2000–1550 BCE)

Cities began to reemerge in Palestine around 2000 BCE signaling the beginning of a new phase of urbanization – the Middle Bronze Age. This age spanned approximately four and a half centuries, and toward the end of the age Palestine was blanketed with heavily fortified cities surrounded by small towns and hamlets. This was the peak of urbanization in ancient Palestine. The cities were larger and more massively fortified than ever before or after. Middle Bronze Age pottery reflects superior craftsmanship, and for the first time in Palestine there is evidence of the technology for producing bronze. Similarities between Palestine's Middle Bronze Age fortification systems, public architecture, and other aspects of material culture indicate strong cultural ties with Syria and Mesopotamia where Amorite dynasties ruled. Indeed it is appropriate to think of Middle Bronze Age Palestine as an extension of Syrian civilization.

Archives discovered at Mari and Alalakh (Tell el-'Atshanah) provide information about circumstances in Syria. A few scattered bits of writing in Akkadian cuneiform have been discovered at Palestinian sites (Hazor and Gezer). Also certain Egyptian documents, such as the execration texts, offer indirect information about circumstances in Palestine. But otherwise Palestine remains on the outskirts of recorded history during the Middle Bronze Age (see [Figure 21.9](#)).

- More pyramid, tomb, and literary texts from Egypt. The *Story of Sinuhe* and two groups of Execration Texts are particularly noteworthy.
- More Akkadian cuneiform texts from Mesopotamian cities, many of these cities dominated now by Amorite dynasties. Two important epics, the *Gilgamesh Epic* and the *Atrakhasis Epic*, probably originated during this period. More than 20,000 documents discovered at Mari (Tell Hariri) in 1934 and following are especially important for understanding the history and culture of the Upper Euphrates and Syria during the eighteenth century BCE.
- Kültepe texts (Old Assyrian dialect of Akkadian) from an Assyrian trade colony residing at Kültepe (ancient Kanesh) in Anatolia during the twentieth to eighteenth centuries BCE.
- Alalakh archive and Idrimi Inscription (in Akkadian) excavated 1937–9 and 1946–9 at Tell el-ʿAtshanah in present-day Turkey. These cuneiform documents date from the late eighteenth and early seventeenth centuries BCE, thus slightly later than the main group of Mari texts. Other texts from Alalakh date from the fifteenth century.

Figure 21.9 Important literary sources from the Middle Bronze Age.

Four population groups need to be introduced at this point – Amorites, Hurrians, Hittites, and Canaanites. Although their presence was not limited to the Middle Bronze Age, it was during that age that these peoples began to figure prominently in written sources. Exactly what role each of these groups played in Palestinian affairs is unclear, but all four clearly had a role, including contributing to the population mix. A fifth group, the Hyksos, is to be associated specifically with the last phase of Middle Bronze and will be discussed below. A word of caution is in order before attempting to explain who these peoples were. Even today we often mix terms of different sorts when referring to population groups, and a term may take on different meanings depending on the context. Depending on the context, for example, ‘Irish,’ ‘American,’ or ‘Arab’ may be intended as primarily geographical, nationalistic, or ethnic–cultural designations. No doubt the ancients did the same thing, which means that even back then it probably would have been difficult to explain what exactly was an Amorite, Hurrian, Hittite, or Canaanite.

Amorites

The term ‘Amorite’ (Akkadian *Amurru*) originally meant something like ‘westerner’ and began to turn up in Akkadian texts near the end of the third millennium BCE. The Amorites spoke a Semitic language and probably are best defined as the indigenous population of the Syrian interior. No Amorite texts have been discovered, so the character of the language is known only from Amorite names mentioned in primarily Akkadian documents. The earliest references to Amorites suggest that they were a largely pastoral and nomadic people. By the beginning of the second millennium, however, a new ruling elite with Amorite names began to make their presence

felt in key Mesopotamian cities such as Isin, Larsa, Mari, and Babylon. While our information about Amorites during the Middle Bronze Age derives from Mesopotamian sources, we may assume that they were making their presence felt in western Syria and Palestine as well. In fact, it probably is appropriate to think of the core population of Middle Bronze Age Syria–Palestine as basically Amorite. During the Late Bronze Age, as we shall see, a particular region in Syria (upper Orontes and Lebanese coast north of Byblos) was known as Amurru. Also, of course, the biblical writers remembered the Amorites as part of the indigenous population of Palestine.

Hurrians

Although concentrated in the region of the upper Khabur (one of the main tributaries of the Euphrates), Hurrians were to be found throughout the Fertile Crescent. Only a few Hurrian texts have been discovered. These are written with the Sumerian–Akkadian cuneiform script, but the language itself is difficult to classify. Neither Semitic nor Indo-European, Hurrian may have been related to the language spoken by the people of Urartu (in the Lake Van area). Hurrians were making their presence felt in cities well outside of the Khabur region already during the Middle Bronze Age. But the Hurrians were particularly strong during the early part of the Late Bronze Age when a Hurrian confederation known as Mitanni exerted political influence deep into Syria. Washukanni, the Mitanni capital, has not yet been located. Tell el-Fakhariyah, situated near where the Khabur crosses the present-day Syrian–Turkish border, is a contender. Tell Mozan in the Khabur plain east of Tell el-Fakhariyah has been identified as the Hurrian city Urkesh. The presence of Hurrian elements in Palestine during the Middle Bronze Age is indicated by two Hurrian names inscribed in cuneiform on a clay envelope discovered at Gezer (Tell Jezer). The name of the earliest known king of Jerusalem, ‘Abdu-Heba (see below), is Hurrian. The Hivites (or Horites) whom the biblical writers counted among the population of Canaan may have been Hurrians.

Hittites

From their chief city Hattusha (present-day Boghazköy in central Turkey), the Hittites carved out an extensive empire. Like the Hurrians, they figure more prominently in Syro-Palestinian affairs during the Late Bronze Age; but already during the seventeenth century BCE they expanded their domain into northern Syria, sacked Yamkhad, and conquered Babylon around 1595. Their capture of Babylon brought to a close the Amorite dynasty to which Hammurabi belonged and that had ruled Babylon for three centuries.¹⁵ The Hittites spoke an Indo-European language, and an archive of Hittite documents has been discovered at Hattusha. These documents are written in a cuneiform script apparently adapted from the Sumerian–Akkadian script. Also, a uniquely Hittite hieroglyphic script was developed to write Luwian, another dialect of Hittite. While Palestine itself seems to have remained beyond the range of Hittite political authority, people of Hittite stock no doubt found their way into Palestine. This is assumed by the biblical writers in any case. Hittites

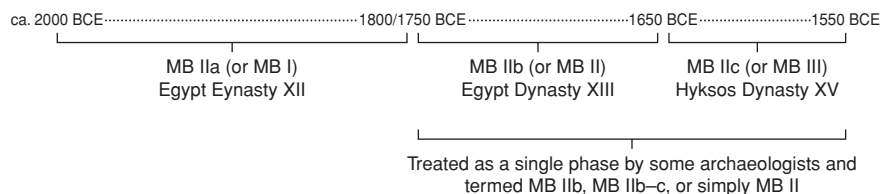


Figure 21.10 The Middle Bronze Age.

always are mentioned along with the Amorites and Canaanites as composing the indigenous peoples of the land. And Abraham is said to have purchased the cave of Machpelah from a Hittite.

Canaanites

References to Canaan and Canaanites in ancient sources (Mari, Alalakh, Ugarit, Amarna Letters) all point toward the Levantine coast. Late Bronze Age Egyptian sources recognize Canaan as an administrative district that included coastal cities such as Tyre and Byblos, for example, while Iron Age and classical sources treat Canaan as roughly equivalent to Phoenicia. The biblical writers often use the term ‘Canaan’ broadly as in ‘land of Canaan,’ but in other instances speak of the Canaanites as if they were a particular element of the population of the land, not always but usually associated with the coastal region. In short, ‘Canaanite’ seems to have been a loose designation for the settlements and population along the Levantine coast and its immediate hinterland. The people in this area spoke a distinctive Semitic language that scholars call ‘Canaanite.’ Most of the Late Bronze Age texts discovered at Ugarit on the Syrian coast were written in a local dialect of Canaanite. Other Canaanite dialects known from Iron Age sources include Hebrew, Ammonite, Moabite, and Edomite.

Contemporary archeologists are not in full agreement regarding either the subphasing of the Middle Bronze Age or what to call the subphases.¹⁶ As explained above, earlier archeologists used the designation MB I in connection with the interim period between Early Bronze and Middle Bronze. Thus the main part of the Middle Bronze Age came to be called MB II and subdivided into MB IIa, MB IIb, and MB IIc. In view of the difficulty of distinguishing between MB IIb and MB IIc on purely archeological grounds, however, some archeologists treat MB IIb and MB IIc as a single phase. This is complicated further by the fact that some archeologists prefer now to dispense with the old MB II a-b-c terminology and rename these phases MB I, MB II, and MB III (see [Figure 21.10](#)).

Middle Bronze IIa (ca. 2000–1800/1750 BCE)

MB IIa witnessed the revival of urban centers in Palestine. These were small unfortified settlements at first, found mostly along the coast and adjacent valleys. Representative sites include Tel Kabri, Tell el-Fukhar/Tel Akko, Megiddo and Aphek (Tell Ras el-ʿAin). As MB IIa drew to a close, settlements began to appear

deeper in the Palestinian interior – for example, Dan (Tell el-Qadi/Tel Dan), Hazor, Shechem (Tell el-Balatah), and Tell el-Far'ah north. Also some of the settlements began to be fortified, enhanced with public buildings, and hamlets sprang up around them. Aphek is an especially important site for understanding MB IIa because it provides a good stratified sequence for the period. Both the location of the MB IIa settlements and MB IIa ceramic forms represent a break from the preceding Interim Period. Instead, the ceramic forms suggest connections with the Lebanese coast and Orontes region where the Early Bronze Age urban momentum had not been interrupted. Probably the new Palestinian settlements were stimulated by population expansion from Lebanon and Syria.

The *Story of Sinuhe* is an Egyptian literary composition relevant to the early stage of the MB IIa reurbanization process.¹⁷ Dating from early in Dynasty XII, the story tells of an Egyptian official's exile to Upper Retenu. Upper Retenu would have been somewhere in the Levant, and the story confirms that the region was largely rural and pastoral. Several stela inscriptions discovered in Egypt witness to occasional Egyptian military campaigns into Palestine by later pharaohs of Dynasty XII – that is, during the latter half of MB IIa. One inscription reports an attack on Shechem. Egyptian presence in Palestine is suggested also by numerous small finds at MB IIa sites and by a statue of an Egyptian official discovered at Megiddo. Yet we need not conclude that Egypt actually ruled Palestine at any time during the Middle Kingdom. Moreover, there was two-way traffic between Egypt and Palestine, as illustrated by the Beni Hassan tomb painting. This painting dates from early in Dynasty XII and depicts a band of Asiatics who had journeyed to Egypt from Syria–Palestine. Thus it provides clues regarding the appearance and dress of the people who inhabited Palestine during MB IIa, at least from an Egyptian perspective.

Perhaps the most intriguing Egyptian documents relevant to MB IIa Palestine are the so-called execration texts. These are magical texts intended to insure control over local settlements and rulers in lands along Egypt's frontiers. Accordingly, they contain incantations and curses directed toward specific places and rulers. Of the numerous execration texts from different periods that have been discovered in Egypt, two groups (Berlin group and Brussels group) contain names of Palestinian places and rulers. Exact dating is uncertain, but the Berlin group probably derives from middle or late Dynasty XII, and the Brussels group a generation or so later.¹⁸ Most of the place names mentioned in the Berlin group that can be identified were settlements along the Palestinian and Lebanese coast (e.g., Ashkelon, Rehob, and Byblos). Those of the Brussels group were scattered in the interior of Palestine as well (e.g., Hazor, Shechem, and Pella). It is interesting that the Berlin group usually associates three or four rulers with each settlement, while the Brussels group normally names only one ruler for each place. Some scholars have interpreted this as indicative that a shift was underway from tribal society to more centralized government. Be that as it may, it is noteworthy that the personal names mentioned in both groups are west Semitic – that is, similar to the Amorite names known from other sources.

The Mari archives shed light on circumstances in Syria and Mesopotamia during the eighteenth century¹⁹ – that is, at approximately the transition from MB IIa to MB IIb. Amorite rulers are now in place in the major cities of Syria and Mesopotamia. One of the powerful rulers of Amorite stock was Shamshi-Adad (ca. 1830–1776)

who united northern Mesopotamia. He delegated territories to his two sons, the important city of Mari falling to the younger, Yasmakh-Adad. Zimri-Lim, of the previously ruling Amorite dynasty of Mari, took refuge in Yamkhad until Shamshi-Adad died, and then recovered Mari. Zimri-Lim's reign (ca. 1776–1761) marked the high point of Mari's history; but his reign was eclipsed when Hammurabi of Babylon, also of Amorite stock, turned on him and conquered Mari. Babylon then reached its first zenith under Hammurabi (dated ca. 1792–1750) who gradually conquered all of southern Mesopotamia and parts of Assyria. The Mari archives are particularly rich for Yasmakh-Adad's last 6 years and Zimri-Lim's 14-year reign. Especially the royal correspondence preserved in these archives allows us to identify the major cities of Mesopotamia and Syria, learn the names of some of their rulers, and catch a glimpse of political and commercial patterns. Among the important cities of the Levant were Carchemish (Kargamiş/Jerablus, where the Euphrates crosses from Turkey into Syria), Halab (present-day Aleppo, chief city of Yamkhad), Ugarit, Qatna, Kadesh (Tell Nebi Mend near the source of the Orontes River), and Hazor. Hazor in northern Palestine is the southernmost city mentioned. We learn about shipments of tin to Hazor, whose king at the time was named Ibni-Adad.²⁰

Middle Bronze IIb–c (ca. 1800/1750–1550 BCE)

There were no sudden changes in the material culture between MB IIa and MB IIb, so any date given for the beginning of MB IIb must be understood as very approximate. Whether to place the beginning of MB IIb nearer to 1800 BCE or nearer to 1750 involves, among other things, the excavations at Hazor, the Mari archives, and Hammurabi. Excavations at Hazor have revealed that it was a relatively insignificant settlement during MB IIa, but then expanded into a major city during MB IIb. The references to Hazor in the Mari correspondence seem to presuppose a city of some consequence and thus probably have to do with the MB IIb phase. The correspondence in which these references occur must be dated before Mari was destroyed by Hammurabi during the thirty-sixth year of his reign, an event usually dated to 1761 BCE. In short, it seems that Hazor's expanded MB IIb city must be dated before 1761, and if we consider that the MB IIb expansion may have occurred several decades before Hazor began to turn up in the Mari correspondence, then the date is pushed further back toward 1800. However, the dates for Hammurabi's reign are not entirely secure; some historians have dated him earlier and others later. Likewise it has been suggested that the expanded city at Hazor might be characterized as transitional between MB IIa and MB IIb rather than fully mature MB IIb.²¹

As explained above, there also is difference of opinion as to whether MB IIb and MB IIc should be treated separately. Changes in material culture from one to the next were gradual and have to do largely with the subtleties of ceramic typology. Basically there was a continued trend toward urbanization that reached a peak toward the end. Yet the surrounding historical circumstances were different for the early part of MB IIb–c than for the latter part, and in that regard it is useful for our purposes to treat them separately.

MB IIb (ca. 1800/1750–1650 BCE) covered approximately the next hundred years after Mari's destruction and corresponds roughly to Egypt's Dynasty XIII (from

ca.1759 to 1630 BCE or later). Dynasty XIII is regarded as a continuation of the Middle Kingdom, yet decline had set in. A rapid turnover of pharaohs resulted in increasingly powerful viziers. A few inscriptions from Byblos are the only written evidence pertaining to Egyptian presence in the Levant during Dynasty XIII. Small finds at Palestinian sites indicate that there was continued contact of some sort, however, while excavations in Egypt's eastern delta, especially at Tell ed-Dab'a, suggest the beginnings of infiltration into the area by people with Syro-Palestinian cultural heritage. Probably we have to do here with the early stages of 'Hyksos' immigration into Egypt. Texts discovered at Alalakh dating from the late eighteenth and early seventeenth centuries BCE fill in the picture somewhat for Syria toward the end of MB IIB and the beginning of MB IIC. We learn from the Alalakh materials, for example, that Yamkhad and Qatna had emerged as widely influential cities in western Syria.

MB IIC (ca. 1650–1550 BCE) corresponds to Egypt's Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1630–1539/23) during which Egypt was dominated by the Hyksos (Dynasty XV). 'Hyksos' is a Greek name derived from an Egyptian phrase that meant 'foreign rulers.' According to Manetho, an Egyptian historian who wrote during the third century BCE, they invaded Egypt and ruled the land from Avaris (Tell ed-Dab'a). Apparently the Hyksos dominated Egypt throughout the Second Intermediate Period, although Dynasties XIV and XVI–XVII (the latter two ruled at Thebes) overlapped chronologically and must have maintained some degree of autonomy. Little written evidence is available regarding the Hyksos, but archeological remains at Tell ed-Dab'a and other Hyksos sites in the eastern delta strongly suggest that they were of Syro-Palestinian origin. This is especially evident from their temple architecture and burial customs, but their material culture in general has been described as a blending of Levantine and Egyptian elements. Hyksos scarabs and small finds discovered as far afield as Nubia and Cyprus probably reflect commercial activity. An abundance of Hyksos scarabs and Egyptian import items found at southern Palestinian sites indicate especially close ties between Egypt and southern Palestine.²² Whether this is to be attributed to commerce also, or whether the Hyksos exercised political hegemony over southern Palestine, is unclear.

Urbanization of ancient Palestine reached its zenith during the Hyksos period – that is, toward the end of MB IIB–c. By that time Palestine was strewn with well-fortified cities surrounded by smaller towns and hamlets. The fortification systems typically consisted of massive walls that were augmented by ramparts or glacis and towers, and were pierced by monumental direct-access gates. Among the Palestinian sites where excavations have produced significant MB IIB–c remains are Dan, Hazor, Megiddo, Tell el-Far'ah (north), Shechem, Aphek, Jericho, Gezer, and Sharuhin (Tell el-'Ajjul). But this is only a partial list of sites that have produced MB IIB–c remains. Jerusalem also was a walled settlement during MB IIB–c, for example, although relatively small.

Hazor became Palestine's premier city.²³ Covering almost 200 acres, it approached in size some of the prominent Syrian cities of the day. Hazor's massive defensive system also calls to mind Syrian parallels (e.g., Carchemish, Ebla, and Qatna). The system consisted of a moat and huge earthen rampart on the western and northern sides of the city, a city wall lifted high by the rampart and rendered more difficult

to approach with siege equipment, and at least two imposing city gates. The gates were protected by towers and offered direct entry into the city between three pairs of pilasters that formed two chambers on each side. Two temples and a corner of a palace also call to mind Syrian parallels and remind us again of the close cultural ties between MB Palestine and the lands to the north.

Gezer serves as an example of a MB IIB–c city that, although not in Hazor's league, was impressive enough. Gezer's walls with a glacis at the base enclosed a city of approximately 30 acres. One entered the city through a monumental three entryway gate, and there was an impressive citadel on the acropolis. But perhaps the most notable feature of MB IIB–c Gezer was its open-air cultic center. This featured a row of ten standing stones (*masseboth*), some almost ten feet high.²⁴ Although it was not one of the more imposing gates of the period, the one at Dan deserves mention also because it has been preserved to roof level. It was constructed of mud brick and had an arched entryway and two pairs of pilasters. Apparently this mud-brick gate was considered inadequate, however, because later it was blocked, covered by an earthen embankment, and replaced with a stone gate. These heavily fortified cities imply a high degree of centralization of power, accumulation of wealth, and intercity warfare.

An Egyptian inscription reports that Ahmose, founder of Dynasty XVIII, conquered Avaris (Tell ed-Dab'a), chased the Hyksos to Sharuhén (Tell el-ʿAjjul) in southwestern Palestine, and destroyed Sharuhén as well. This event would have occurred somewhere around 1550 BCE, and archeological evidence from Tell ed-Dab'a and Tell el-ʿAjjul indicates that both sites were destroyed about that time. Moreover, there appears to have been a wave of city destructions especially in southern Palestine that many archeologists attribute to Egyptian armies who may have pursued the Hyksos beyond Sharuhén. Whatever the explanation for this wave of destructions, archeologists recognize it as the close of the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age.

THE LATE BRONZE AGE (ca. 1550–1200)

With the expulsion of the Hyksos, Egypt entered its New Kingdom Period that was to last approximately two and a half centuries. This was Egypt's empire age during which the pharaohs of Dynasties XVIII–XIX ruled from Thebes and expanded Egypt's frontiers from Nubia to Syria. Palestine's Late Bronze Age corresponds to this New Kingdom Period, and a crucial point to keep in mind is that Late Bronze Palestine was essentially Egyptian territory.²⁵ Egypt's imperial interests met with more resistance in Syria, however, where the Hurrians and Hittites had interests as well. Mycenaean civilization also reached its heyday during the Late Bronze Age. Centered on the Greek mainland, Mycenaean hegemony spread to the islands and impacted the whole eastern Mediterranean world. Mesopotamia, on the other hand, dominated now by Kassites, entered a dark age.

Egypt's New Kingdom left relatively abundant written records, and because Palestine was an Egyptian domain these New Kingdom/Late Bronze Age records are considerably more revealing about local circumstances in Palestine than are Early and Middle Bronze Age sources. Accounts of Egyptian campaigns into Syria–Palestine provide extensive lists of Palestinian cities, for example, while Egyptian inscriptions

- Extensive hieroglyphic inscriptions and literary texts from Egypt's New Kingdom Period, especially from Thebes (Karnak and Luxor).
- Amarna Letters (Akkadian cuneiform on clay tablets). Correspondence from foreign lands including Syro-Palestinian vassals to Amenhotep III and IV. These were discovered in 1887 and later at the site of the Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten's capital city Akhetaten in the el-Amarna district of Egypt.
- Hittite archive (Hittite language written in cuneiform script) discovered in 1906 and following at the site of the Hittite capital Hattusha (Boghazköy) in central Turkey.
- Ugaritic archives (a Canaanite dialect written with a cuneiform–alphabetic script) discovered at the site of ancient Ugarit (Ras Shamra) on the Syrian coast, excavated 1929 and following. These archives include royal correspondence and other documents of various sorts including religious texts pertaining to Baal and other gods of the Canaanite pantheon.
- Nuzi (Some 4,000 Akkadian tablets with Hurrian influence) excavated 1925–31 at Yorghun Tepe in northern Iraq and dating to approximately the fifteenth century BCE.

Figure 21.11 Important literary sources from the Late Bronze Age.

and other Egypt-related finds in Palestine enable archeologists to correlate the archeological data fairly closely with Egyptian history. The Amarna Letters, described below, provide for the first time a close-up look at sociopolitical circumstances in Syria–Palestine, including the names and intrigues of local Egyptian vassals. Archives of texts discovered at Ugarit on the Syrian coast, while not from Palestine itself, introduce the gods of Canaan along with basic religious themes and cultic practices.

Ugarit managed to survive under the shadow of the Hittite and Egyptian empires without succumbing completely to the imperial agenda of either. As a port city, moreover, it was a meeting place between Mycenaean and Levantine civilization. The hundreds of literary documents discovered at Ugarit date for the most part around 1400 BCE and witness to the pluralistic character of the city. These documents include texts in various languages – Sumerian, Akkadian, Hurrian, Hittite, Egyptian, and Minoan – but most of them are in a local Canaanite dialect that scholars call Ugaritic. Ugaritic was written in cuneiform script, but the cuneiform characters were used alphabetically. Alphabetic writing was an important new development in human history, and soon a noncuneiform alphabetic script was developed for writing the Canaanite language.

As explained above, the end of the Middle Bronze Age and beginning of the Late Bronze Age is marked by a wave of city destructions that was especially devastating in southern Palestine.²⁶ Probably this is to be interpreted as Egyptian actions against cities that had been allied with the Hyksos and may have remained under Hyksos control after the fall of Avaris and Sharuhen. Most of the cities in northern Palestine were destroyed during the latter half of the sixteenth century also, but it

is less clear that this occurred as a single wave or that it was the work of Egyptian armies. Possibly the northern cities were victims of the general disorder and violence that would have accompanied the breakdown of Middle Bronze Age political structures.

Some of the cities, especially in northern Palestine, seem to have been rebuilt relatively soon after they were destroyed; and ceramic traditions continued, although generally of poorer quality. But Palestine's urban society never fully recovered. Many cities remained abandoned, and those that continued occupation during the Late Bronze Age were much more modest than their Middle Bronze predecessors. It has been estimated that the number of settlements in western Palestine dropped by 30 to 40 percent, and that the total settled area was reduced by a third.²⁷ Most of the surviving Late Bronze Age cities were situated in the lowlands. There were exceptions, such as Shechem, Jerusalem, and Hebron, but these were scattered far apart leaving most of the hill country sparsely settled. Typically the Late Bronze Age cities remained unfortified or repaired and reused their Middle Bronze Age defensive systems. All of the above fits the pattern of Egyptian imperial rule. The Egyptians would hardly have encouraged and may not have permitted the cities to refortify. Instead, they supported petty vassal rulers who used the declining cities as a base to exploit the land in Egypt's behalf. Economic decline exacerbated by Egyptian taxation would have encouraged people to withdraw from the cities and beyond the reach of Egyptian administration.

While the Palestinian cities deteriorated during the Late Bronze Age, however, their material remains reflect an international character. The pottery is a good example. Along with local wares that continued Middle Bronze traditions, Late Bronze Age pottery includes a broad representation of Mycenaean and Cypriot styles. Naturally there is an abundance of Egypt-related items in Late Bronze Age contexts, and the Egyptian connection also explains the overall international character of Late Bronze Age Palestine. Egypt was concerned not only to exploit Palestine itself, but also to reap the benefits of international trade; and Palestine was part of Egypt's international trade network. Arts and crafts, such as ivory carving, were highly developed in the Levant during the Late Bronze Age, and some of this will have been produced locally in Palestine.

Hazor, for some reason, managed to stand apart from the pattern of urban decline described above. Middle Bronze Age Hazor met with a catastrophic destruction that left a thick layer of ash, but the city recovered quickly and continued to flourish during the Late Bronze Age at about the same size and presumably with about the same level of population. The Late Bronze Age city was well fortified with a defensive system that partially reused the massive Middle Bronze Age system. Two of Hazor's Late Bronze Age temples are particularly noteworthy. One of these was discovered on the inner slope of the rampart that protected the western side of the city (the rampart constructed during MB but serving still as part of the LB defensive system). Placed in a niche in the western wall of this temple were several small stelae and a small statue of a seated figure. Depicted on one of the stelae were two hands raised as if in worship before a crescent and full moon. The seated man had a moon crescent on his chest and was holding a cup in his right hand. The other temple, the so-called Orthostat Temple, was situated at the north end of the city

and showed evidence of having gone through four building phases during the Late Bronze Age. It consisted of three parts in approximately south–north alignment: a porch, a main hall, and a broad room along the north side of the hall. The plan is similar to roughly contemporary temples at Alalakh and also calls to mind Solomon’s temple as described in 1 Kings 6–8. Presumably this broad room was the inner shrine or ‘holy of holies.’

There were no sudden changes in Palestine’s material culture during the Late Bronze Age, so the archeological subphasing is a matter of coordinating gradual changes, mostly in the pottery, with Egyptian history. Egypt-related items discovered in Palestinian contexts play a crucial role in this endeavor, as does the presence of Mycenaean and Cypriot pottery. Archeologists agree on three main subphases, but sometimes differ slightly on the dates and do not always use the same terminology:

- LB I (ca. 1550–1400 BCE) Some archeologists subdivide LB I further into
 - LB Ia (ca. 1550–1470 BCE – before Thutmose III’s victory at Megiddo)
 - LB Ib (ca. 1470–1400 BCE – from Thutmose III to the Amarna age)
- LB IIa (ca. 1400–1300 BCE) The so-called Amarna age. Some archeological manuals may refer to it simply as LB II.
- LB IIb (ca. 1300–1200 BCE) The time of the early pharaohs of Dynasty XIX. Some archeologists refer to it as LB III. Also, for reasons to be explained below, there is some inclination to date the end of LB IIb (= LB III) ca. 1150 rather than 1200 BCE.

Regardless of one’s views on the finer points of archeological terminology and dating, it is possible and useful for our purposes to distinguish four historical phases that correspond essentially to the archeological divisions outlined above.

The early years of Dynasty XVIII (LB Ia, ca. 1550–1470 BCE)

Ahmosé, recognized as the first pharaoh of Dynasty XVIII, expelled the Hyksos from Egypt and destroyed Sharūhen in southwestern Palestine. A wave of city destructions in southern Palestine about the same time probably is to be attributed to Egyptian armies intent on crushing Hyksos power once and for all. It is not clear whether or to what extent Ahmosé and his immediate successors contributed to the demise of MB cities in northern Palestine. Probably Amenhotep I and certainly Thutmose I campaigned deep into Syria; Thutmose I (ca. 1493–1479) reached the Euphrates in fact and erected a stela there. Yet the early pharaohs of Dynasty XVIII did not establish any sort of permanent military presence in Syria–Palestine, and during the reigns of Thutmose II and Hatshepsut the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni gained the upper hand in northern Syria. Also, possibly in alliance with Mitanni, the cities Tunip and Kadesh emerged as regional powers in central Syria.

From Thutmose III's victory at Megiddo to the Amarna age (LB Ib, ca. 1470–1400 BCE)

When Thutmose III (ca. 1458–1425) finally gained the throne at Hatshepsut's death, one of his first moves was to march against the king of Kadesh whose political influence now extended into northern Palestine. The latter chose to make a stand at Megiddo where he was joined by a host of rulers and princes from southern Syria and northern Palestine.²⁸ Thutmose managed to catch them off guard, however, defeated them in open battle, and when they retreated behind the walls of Megiddo laid siege to the city. When Megiddo fell to Thutmose some months later he became the undisputed master of the region. Unlike his predecessors who had conducted only sporadic campaigns, Thutmose set about to establish permanent military and political authority in Syria–Palestine. Rather than executing the defeated rulers for example (the king of Kadesh had managed to escape), he extracted oaths of loyalty from them, left garrisons of Egyptian soldiers at strategic places, and followed up with military campaigns throughout his reign. In these later campaigns Thutmose subdued Kadesh and Tunip, reached the Euphrates where he defied a Mitanni army (the king of Mitanni chose to withdraw rather than fight), and erected a stela near that of his grandfather Thutmose I. While Thutmose campaigned freely throughout Syria–Palestine, however, he managed to bring only Palestine and southern Syria under permanent Egyptian control. His successors maintained the grip on Palestine, and Amenhotep II (1426–1400) claimed spectacular victories in Syria. Eventually it was clear that Egypt would not be able to annex Syria to its empire, however, and Mitanni was beginning to recognize that the Hittites posed a more serious and immediate threat than the Egyptians. Thus Egypt and Mitanni concluded a treaty by which they recognized each other's zone of political influence. Palestine remained undisputed Egyptian territory.

The Amarna age (LB IIa/LB II, ca. 1400–1300 BCE)

When Amenhotep III ascended the throne shortly after 1400, Egypt's New Kingdom was in its heyday with a firm grip on Nubia, Palestine, and southern Syria, and reaping the benefits of these territories. Then his son and successor Amenhotep IV (ca. 1353–1336) instigated a religious reform that favored the sun god Aten over Amun of Thebes. In addition to changing his own name from Amenhotep to Akhenaten, this pharaoh built a new capital city in what is now the Amarna district of Egypt. The reform was unsuccessful in the end, and destabilized Egypt while the Hittites under Shuppiluliuma I (ca. 1380–1340) managed to expand deep into Syria and conquer Mitanni. The so-called Amarna Letters (discovered at the site of Akhenaten's capital) shed light on local circumstances in Palestine at this crucial time. These letters are correspondence from the rulers of various surrounding lands to Amenhotep III and Akhenaten. Although most of them were sent from largely Canaanite- or Amorite-speaking regions and addressed to the Egyptian court, they are written in Akkadian, the international language of the day. For Palestine they present a scene of petty Egyptian vassals residing in the declining cities, squabbling with each other, and unable to police disruptive elements in the countryside.

Examples are ‘Abdu-Heba, Egypt’s vassal king of Jerusalem, and Shuwardata the vassal king of a city south of Jerusalem (possibly Gath or Hebron). Two letters from Shuwardata accuse ‘Abdu-Heba of disloyalty. Five letters from ‘Abdu-Heba, whose name is of Hurrian origin, insist that it is not he but others who are disloyal to Egypt and urge the pharaoh to send him military support. We learn from the Amarna Letters that Shechem, under Lab’ayu and his sons, managed to achieve a degree of independence for a time and to exert some regional influence in central Palestine. Amurru, on Egypt’s Syrian frontier and taking advantage of Hittite advance, also emerged as a semi-independent state. In their letters to the Egyptian court, the local rulers occasionally refer to those who flout Egyptian authority, or who are disruptive to the social order in one way or another, as ‘*Apiru*. ‘*Apiru* probably is related to the biblical term ‘Hebrew,’ but clearly was not intended as an ethnic designation. A proper translation would be ‘rebel,’ ‘outcast,’ ‘bandit,’ or something of the sort.

Sety I, Ramesses II and Merneptah (LB IIB/LB III, ca. 1300–1200 BCE)

The early pharaohs of Dynasty XIX, particularly Sety I (ca. 1290–1279) and Ramesses II (ca. 1279–1213), restored stability in Egypt and set about to reaffirm Egyptian authority in Syria–Palestine. By this time, however, the Hittites were deeply embedded as far south as Kadesh and Damascus. Kadesh was the scene of a crucial battle between Ramesses II and Muwattalli I about 1275 BCE. The Hittite army seems to have won the day. But it was not a decisive victory and the two powers, finding themselves at a stalemate, concluded a treaty a few years later that reaffirmed Hittite control in Syria and Egyptian control in Palestine. Merneptah (ca. 1213–1204) ascended the throne late in life, after Ramesses II’s unusually long and prosperous reign, and his most important military achievement was a victory over Libyans who were threatening the western delta. Yet Merneptah also conducted at least one campaign into Palestine, and at the end of an inscription commemorating the Libyan victory claims:

The princes are prostrate, saying, ‘Mercy!’
Not one raises his head among the Nine Bows.
Desolation is for Tehenu: Hatti is pacified;
Plundered is the Canaan with every evil;
Carried off is Ashkelon; seized upon is Gezer;
Yanoam is made as that which does not exist;
Israel is laid waste, his seed is not;
Hurru is become as a widow for Egypt!
All lands together, they are pacified;
Everyone who was restless, he has been bound.²⁹

This text has received a great deal of attention because it includes the earliest reference to Israel in surviving written sources from ancient times. The earliest references to Moab and Edom also appear about this time. Many scholars question whether the Israelite exodus from Egypt described in the Bible was a historical event.³⁰ Those

who are confident that it was a historical event generally identify Ramesses II or Merneptah as the pharaoh of the exodus. Be that as it may, it is clear from the Palestinian archeological evidence as well as from Egyptian records that Palestine was more thoroughly controlled and influenced by Egypt during this last century of the Late Bronze Age than ever before.

THE END OF THE BRONZE AGE

Widespread disturbances and population upheavals underway approximately 1200 BCE mark the end of the Late Bronze Age. Mycenaean civilization collapsed, the Hittite empire came to an end, and Egypt entered another period of decentralization – the Third Intermediate Period. Ugarit, Alalakh, and other major cities throughout the ancient world were destroyed. Among the peoples on the move who may have contributed to the collapse of the Egyptian and Hittite empires, were the so-called Sea Peoples. Ramesses III (ca. 1187–1156 BCE) of Dynasty XX defended Egypt's frontiers against the Sea Peoples and mounted a last-ditch effort to reassert Egyptian authority in Palestine. His efforts are reflected in the archeological evidence – namely, there appears to have been a brief revival of Egyptian administration in Palestine that lasted through the reign of Ramesses VI (ca. 1145–1137). Realistically, therefore, it may be appropriate to date the end of the Late Bronze Age in Palestine a half century or so after 1200 BCE.³¹

Then Syria–Palestine, and indeed most of the Middle East, entered a 'dark age' that would last through the first three centuries or so of the Iron Age. These opening centuries of the Iron Age may be regarded as dark-age centuries both in the sense that it was a time of urban fragmentation and decline, and in the sense that we know so little about what was going on. Contemporary written records are scarce and archeological remains are meager. Late Bronze Age pottery traditions continued, however, and the social, political, and religious patterns that characterized the Bronze Age must have remained deeply embedded in Palestinian society. Israel's origins are to be sought in these dark-age centuries.

NOTES

- ¹ The regional name 'Palestine' is of course anachronistic for prehistoric times and the Bronze Age. It derives from the Philistines who did not settle in the region until the early Iron Age.
- ² See especially Bar-Yosef (1984: 3–16) and Ben-Tor (1984: 17–23).
- ³ Neolithic and Chalcolithic sometimes are referred to as periods rather than ages.
- ⁴ In this chapter I have followed the historical chronology from Sasson (1995) and the archeological chronology from Mazar (1990). As an example of how archeologists occasionally disagree on dates, Mazar places the beginning of the Bronze Age in Palestine ca. 3300 BCE, Dever (1992: 109–14) favors 3400 BCE, and Ben-Tor (1992: 95–6) favors 3200 BCE.
- ⁵ Selections from many of the written sources listed here and below are translated in anthologies edited by J. B. Pritchard (1955, 1968).
- ⁶ For detailed treatments of the archeology of Early Bronze Palestine, see Broshi and Gophna (1984), Richard (1987), Mazar (1990: 91–150), and Ben-Tor (1992).
- ⁷ I have used the ancient names for cities in this essay when they are known, and given the present-day names of the corresponding archeological sites in parentheses – e.g., Arad (Tell Arad). In many cases the ancient name is unknown – e.g., Tel Erani.

- 8 Broshi and Gophna (1984) provide a full listing of EB II–III sites with estimation of their sizes.
- 9 Broshi and Gophna (1984: 45).
- 10 Robert Adams, *Heartland of Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), cited by Weiss (1985b: 123).
- 11 Weiss (1985a); Dornemann (1992).
- 12 Milano (1995).
- 13 E.g., Mazar (1990: 158).
- 14 E.g., Richard (1987).
- 15 Sasson (1995: 913).
- 16 For detailed treatments of the archeology of Middle Bronze Age Palestine, see Dever (1987), Mazar (1990: 174–231) and Kempinski (1992).
- 17 For a detailed treatment of Egyptian sources pertaining to Palestine during the Bronze Age, see Redford (1992a).
- 18 Redford (1992b).
- 19 Durand (1992, 4: 529–36) and Margueron (1992, 4: 525–38).
- 20 Malamat (1983).
- 21 Mazar (1990: 194).
- 22 See especially Weinstein (1981).
- 23 Ben-Tor (1993).
- 24 William Dever (1997), who excavated Gezer, dates the beginning of this high place to MB IIa.
- 25 For detailed treatments of Egypt's relations with Palestine during the New Kingdom Period see Weinstein (1981) and Redford (1992a: 125–280).
- 26 For detailed treatments of the archeology of the Late Bronze Age see Weinstein (1981), Gonen (1984, 1992), Leonard (1989), and Mazar (1990: 232–94).
- 27 Gonen (1984: 63–9).
- 28 Redford (1992a: 156–8) emphasizes the king of Kadesh's role as leader of the coalition.
- 29 Pritchard (1955: 378).
- 30 E.g., Miller and Hayes (1986).
- 31 As does Gonen (1992: 216).

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

PALESTINE DURING THE IRON AGE



Keith W. Whitelam

INTRODUCTION

Palestine in the Iron Age forms part of a rich and intricate historical tapestry whose threads, woven deep in the past, continue into the present. Its geographical and climatic diversity has produced a mosaic of landscapes that have an important bearing upon its history. Yet, equally, it forms part of an ancient world from which it cannot easily be separated as though it were a self-contained, autonomous domain. The concentrated attention of countless biblical specialists, historians, and archaeologists has helped to elucidate many separate pieces of this rich mosaic. However, the inevitable consequence of such specialization, vital as it is to scholarship, is the intimation that Palestine in the Iron Age represents a discrete entity, both geographically and chronologically, that can be understood apart from the many currents that tie it to its wider world.¹ Its geographical boundaries are fluid, particularly the southern, arid zones where settlement is not only at the mercy of variable rainfall but is intricately linked to the political situation throughout the region as a whole. Equally, the numerous schemes that have been devised by historians and archaeologists to define its chronological limits tend to suggest to the unsuspecting reader that this is a discrete period in time estranged from the chronological links that precede and follow.

This has been reinforced by the peculiar interest of biblical specialists, including historians and archaeologists among its ranks, in this period of the region's history because of the long-held belief that it represents the 'biblical period' *par excellence*.² According to the biblical traditions, this was the period of Israel's conquest of the land after miraculous escape from captivity in Egypt, the period of the struggle for survival against the Philistines, encapsulated in the traditions about Samson and David, and the period of great kings with the founding of the Davidic dynasty, the building of the temple by Solomon, culminating in the devastation of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. As such, for biblical scholarship it has come to represent the period when Israel emerged fully into the light of history at the end of the Late Bronze Age, the period of its development into a major power in the region under David and Solomon, before the devastation of the northern and southern kingdoms by the Assyrians and Babylonians culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the

Davidic dynasty in 586/7 BCE (Noth 1960; Bright 1981; Soggin 1984; Miller and Hayes 1986).

Biblical scholars have long thought that many of the biblical traditions were crystallized and committed to writing during this period, particularly within the Davidic court, and that many of the historical traditions, particularly in the books of Samuel and Kings, provide a sound basis for a historical description of the period. Thus, scholarly investment over a century or more has been dominated by attempts to correlate archaeological discoveries with the events and personalities of the biblical traditions. The Iron Age in Palestine has been dominated by, in effect seen to be coterminous with, the history of ancient Israel. Thus for the Judaeo-Christian tradition it has come to be regarded as fundamental for Western history in particular and so for world history in general. According to Hallo (1992: 1–6), the opening of the period marks a ‘watershed’ in human history comparable to the agricultural and urban revolutions. Such an assessment reinforces the perception that this is a discrete, even unique, period of human history.³ The traditional understanding of this period as dominated by the history of ancient Israel is now a matter of considerable debate following radically changed perceptions on how the biblical traditions developed and how they relate to history. At the same time, the increasing body of archaeological data has added considerably to our knowledge of Palestine in the Iron Age, providing a radically different picture of the history of the region from those based primarily on the biblical traditions.⁴ How far it represents a ‘watershed’ or discrete, even unique, period in human history, rather than a continuation of important trends in the history of the region is now a matter of considerable contest.

The myriad of competing and confusing schemes devised by different archaeologists, which define the limits and internal relations of this period, only serve to illustrate how far scholarly convention and convenience hide assumptions that colour the way in which history is understood and represented. Such chronological schemes are determined by an understanding of political events, largely on assumptions drawn from the biblical traditions, rather than a primarily archaeological understanding of material culture. The very name for the period, the Iron Age, is misleading in that iron did not become the dominant metal in the region until the tenth century, nearly two centuries after the opening of the period (Mazar 1992: 298; Muhly 1992: 18).⁵ Muhly (1992: 18) points out that there was no metal shortage either side of 1200 BCE so that ‘whatever the underlying causes of this important historical and cultural transition . . . they do not seem to have anything to do with shortages of metal’. Equally, iron was not replaced as the dominant metal at the close of this period in 586/7 BCE. The delimitation of the period has been determined more by political events and an understanding of history based upon the biblical traditions than on archaeological considerations. The danger is that such precise archaeological phases tend to suggest discrete periods, representing identifiable breaks, by emphasizing discontinuities and overlooking or playing down equally important continuities.⁶ This has been encouraged further by the search for ancient Israel and its physical manifestations. For much of biblical scholarship until very recently, the beginning of the Iron Age was defined by the destruction and decline of urban centres in Palestine in association with the emergence of Israel, while its closure was marked by the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Babylonians. The seemingly

objective material determinants of the chronological limits of this period were determined by a prior understanding of political events – the appearance of Israel in Palestine and the downfall of the Davidic monarchy in 586/7 BCE. Such a history of events, *l'histoire événementielle* as Paul Lacombe and François Simiand termed it, was largely dependent upon a reading of the biblical traditions. It is variously referred to as comprising 'the period of the Judges', 'the settlement period', 'the monarchic period', or even 'the Israelite period' (Aharoni 1982; Mazar 1992: 258).⁷ Thus the history of ancient Israel has dominated the history of the region as traditionally presented for much of this century. The extent of our knowledge of Israel's origins or emergence within Palestine is one of the most controversial and contentious issues within biblical studies, generating considerable passion and rancour. Similarly, the question of the origins, extent, and nature of an Israelite monarchy founded by David, the search for a historical David, has become a site for scholarly debate, denunciation, and personal accusations.

The conventional portrait of this period is of the emergence and rise to dominance in the region of ancient Israel following an initial catastrophic collapse throughout the eastern Mediterranean. It closes with a similar catastrophic defeat of the southern kingdom of Judah in 586/7 BCE including the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the end of the Davidic dynasty. Viewed in this way, Palestine in the Iron Age appears to be a period of dramatic flux moving from the trough of depression to the crest of political and economic resurgence in the Iron II, as a result of a new and distinct ethnic entity in the region, only to be plunged again into political and economic crisis at the end of the period. Our texts, including the biblical traditions, encourage this sense of the dramatic by concentrating on the dominant personalities and the most dramatic events of the period. These events that shine so brightly, thereby catching and holding the attention of historians, are surface events, 'surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs. A history of brief, rapid, nervous fluctuations, by definition ultra-sensitive; the least tremor sets all its antennae quivering' (Braudel 1972: 21).⁸ Yet within this range of movement over centuries there is 'immense inertia' where routine predominates: a routine that helps to define the boundaries between 'possibility and impossibility' (Braudel 1974: xi). To set the beginnings of the Iron Age at 1200 BCE provides a starting point that explains little and raises a series of very important questions, which have underpinned the debates on Israelite history during the second half of this century. These chronological boundary markers should be treated for what they are, scholarly conveniences in order to concentrate attention upon a particular period in the history of the region. It is essential to look carefully at the processes and trends that precede and follow, and which provide the threads that bind the historical tapestry of Palestine through the centuries (Coote and Whitelam 1987; Finkelstein 1995, 1998; Levy and Holl 1995).

While our texts direct our gaze to the dominant personalities, archaeologists have increasingly made us evermore aware of the lives and struggles of the vast majority of the population, hidden and anonymous, against the environment; their responses to famine, piracy, brigandage, exploitation, and shifting political alliances. It is archaeology above all that has opened this world to us, what Schama (Vulliamy 1999: 3) has called, in a different context, 'the hinges between private and public

life'. A world that has been neglected by our earlier standard biblical histories, which, by concentrating on religious and political developments in the search for ancient Israel, remain unaware of the lives of at least 90 per cent of the population of ancient Palestine. Broad movements when viewed over centuries help to explain the surface movements that are the concern of chroniclers and many contemporary historians. It was these fluctuations, the peaks and troughs of demographic growth, that, as of all ancient societies, characterized Palestine in the Iron Age. It was not always a continuous rise but the settlement shifts and demographic changes helped to transform and revitalize Iron Age Palestine. Within the six centuries traditionally assigned to this period there is also an almost unobservable inertia of the repeated and regular, which characterizes all periods prior to the present and demands greater attention if we are to understand the Iron Age in Palestine.

THE TRANSFORMATION AND REINVIGORATION OF IRON AGE PALESTINE

For most of its history Palestine lacked the infrastructure and weight of numbers to compete with the neighbouring riverine civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. However, its position on the land routes and sea lanes of the eastern Mediterranean world economy often allowed it to exploit its favoured position. This had its drawbacks, of course, since it was constantly at the attention of world powers who needed to control these lucrative trade and military routes, either by proxy or directly. The Late Bronze Age is indicative of both the benefits and drawbacks of this situation, with evidence of material prosperity, international trade and exchange, and cosmopolitan culture, but also of direct imperial control in the form of Egyptian garrisons.⁹ Any disruption within the Mediterranean economic system reverberated throughout the region, affecting the fortunes of Palestine and its people. The Late Bronze Age was marked by extensive international trade, although it must be emphasized that the agrarian economy remained dominant: this economy was the locus of the revival of Palestine's fortunes in the early Iron Age following the disruptions of the end of the Late Bronze Age. Palestinian produce, including grain, wine, oil, linen, dyed textiles, and timber, was widely distributed throughout the Mediterranean system from Egypt through the Aegean as far as Italy (Liverani 1987: 68; Cline 1994: 50).¹⁰ Such open trade routes around the Mediterranean during the Late Bronze Age directly benefited Palestine, given its strategic position within the trade nexus.¹¹

The disruption and dislocation of this international system at the end of the Late Bronze Age reverberated throughout the eastern Mediterranean with significant consequences for Palestine and its inhabitants. This dislocation has frequently been represented as a sudden cataclysmic collapse throughout the eastern Mediterranean ushering in 'a dark age' that represents a significant break with what had gone before. Such views encouraged searches for monocausal explanations for the collapse, ranging from dramatic changes in the climate or volcanic eruptions to foreign invasions by new ethnic groups.¹² However, re-evaluations of the complex data now available have led to a significant shift in understandings of the events of the Late Bronze to Iron Age transition throughout the region.¹³ Earlier portraits of dramatic collapse stressed

the widespread destruction of urban centres throughout the Mediterranean world: ranging from the destruction of the coastal cities of Cyprus (Karageorghis 1990, 1992; Stager 1995: 337), the collapse of the Hittite empire in Anatolia (Singer 1987), to the destruction or abandonment of urban centres along the Syria–Palestine littoral.¹⁴ The effects within Palestine appeared all too evident with the destruction of many of its major towns: Hazor, Aphek, Beth Shemesh, Gezer, Tell Beit Mirsim, Tell Abu Hawam, and Lachish, among others (Mazar 1992: 260).¹⁵ Pottery imports from Cyprus and Greece disappeared, suggesting a disruption and dislocation of international trade leading to catastrophic collapse throughout the region. In addition, considerable population displacements, like today's, accompanied such widespread destruction. The movement of groups of 'Sea Peoples', still one of the most intriguing and disputed questions in the history of the region, illustrated movements throughout the whole of the Mediterranean basin from its western extremities to the coast of Palestine and Egypt (Na'aman 1994: 239).¹⁶ Hallo (1992: 2) cites such population displacements as one of the major characteristics of the period. The documentary evidence points to population movements into Palestine by various groups, including the Sea Peoples and Syro-Anatolian groups (Na'aman 1994: 239). The collapse was invariably explained in ethnic terms. For Palestine it was seen to be the result of the invasion of the Sea Peoples along the Palestinian littoral in combination with the invasion or infiltration of Israelite tribes from Transjordan. Such historical reconstructions were determined by a reading of the biblical traditions with extra-biblical evidence, from excavations or textual materials, being used to illustrate the biblically based accounts.

However, it has become increasingly clear that the destruction of towns throughout the eastern Mediterranean, including within Palestine, was not synchronous but took place over a century or more. The complexity of the situation in Cyprus, where not all towns suffered the same fate or at the same time, is illustrative of the wider situation (Karageorghis 1992: 80). Dever (1992: 101) notes that a number of Palestinian sites suffered only minor disruptions, with a continuing Egyptian presence down to the time of Rameses VI (c. 1143–1136 BCE). The dating of the destruction layers of these Late Bronze Age centres is controversial and constantly being revised (Fritz 1987: 86–9). Mazar (1992: 285) warns that the precise dating of such destruction levels is based on 'relatively flimsy evidence'. Thus the idea that this was a rapid and dramatic collapse marking a distinct cultural change has tended to obscure the protracted nature of the disruption and dislocation throughout the region. Hazor was destroyed in the middle of the thirteenth century BCE, whereas Lachish survived until the second half of the twelfth century BCE (Na'aman 1994: 223; Fritz 1995: 43). This evidence, along with recent data from surface surveys and excavations illustrating that new rural villages in the highlands and steppes were largely indigenous, rapidly undermined the biblically derived assumption that many of the Palestinian towns were destroyed by invading Israelites (see Lemche 1985; Ahlström 1986; Coote and Whitelam 1987; Finkelstein 1988; Thompson 1992).

The fact that the decline and disruption was spread over a century or more, and that it was uneven throughout the region, suggests that it was the result of a complex set of circumstances. It illustrates the rhythms and patterns of Palestinian history, rather than representing some defining moment.¹⁷ Any protracted process

of disruption and dislocation invariably encompasses a combination of factors, where it is difficult to distinguish between cause and effect. However, it is now evident that the system as a whole did not collapse to be replaced by something new, but was able to adapt and generate recovery from within itself. Although the end of the Late Bronze Age has often been thought of as a 'dark age', with much of its history hidden from the historian's view, the increasing body of data suggests that the foundations for revival, demographic expansion, and economic growth emerged from the countryside. It was here that the seeds of the revival and transformation, which gathered pace throughout the Iron Age, were to be found. Thus it can be said that the beginnings of the Iron Age in Palestine were founded on the Late Bronze Age rather than representing a major cultural and ethnic break.

Despite the focus on the disruption and destruction of towns and interregional trade, the regeneration and transformation of Iron Age Palestine was dependent upon the countryside. This was a rural world, populated by peasants and pastoralists, in which agricultural production was critical. The size of population, and so the growth and development of towns, were dependent upon agricultural produce and food supplies. Demography and economics present us with the most obvious and easily appreciated signs of these deep-seated movements: the surface events force attention upon political events, the roles of individuals, the destruction or abandonment of towns, but it is the rural population and its produce that silently guide and underpin the history of the region. Thus it is becoming clear that the opening of the Iron Age was not a response to a sudden and dramatic collapse, as it has usually been understood, but was a protracted process of dislocation in which there are signs of health and revival, which led to a transformation that gathered momentum throughout the period. The low-water mark at its opening was followed by a dramatic shift in settlement and a striking rise in population, resulting eventually in a series of small statelike structures throughout the region that survived until the re-establishment of imperial power in the shape of the Assyrians and Babylonians.

REVIVAL IN THE COUNTRYSIDE: THE WEIGHT OF NUMBERS

The weight of numbers in any agrarian economy is vital: demography, it might be said, is the engine of ancient history. Although famine and drought were constant threats throughout the history of Palestine, naturally limiting the size of population – particularly when the carrying capacity of the land had been reached, 'the limits of the possible' as Braudel termed it – this was not the case at the end of the Late Bronze Age. The disruptions and dislocations that engulfed the eastern Mediterranean at the end of the Late Bronze Age had profound, often catastrophic, effects on the indigenous population of Palestine. Yet, as Braudel (1974: 3) notes, 'every recession solves a certain number of problems, removes pressures and benefits the survivors'. The transformation of Palestinian society in the Iron Age, which gathered momentum throughout the period, eventually leading to the revival of the towns with increasing fortification at some sites, began in the countryside as a response to the recession. The revival of the towns in the Iron II period is often attributed to the reawakening of long-distance trade throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

However, the roots of the transformation are to be found in the realignment and demographic changes within Palestinian society, which followed the disruptions at the beginning of the period. The transformation of Iron Age Palestine was based on gradual population growth: as villages and towns increased and expanded, so the exchange of goods increased. But this was not a massive tidal wave of population sweeping across the Palestinian landscape from outside, as earlier explanations based on the biblical traditions always assumed.¹⁸ How far it was the result of internal population displacement, external movements, or internal demographic growth is a matter for considerable debate, which is difficult to resolve due to the paucity and ambiguity of some data.¹⁹ However, it is a process that needs to be viewed over two to three centuries in order to reveal the significant realignment and transformation of Palestinian society that had been underway since the beginning of the Iron Age.

The reordering of the countryside has been spectacularly revealed by a series of regional surveys conducted by Israeli archaeologists in recent years. These surveys have revolutionized the study of the history of Palestine in the Iron Age and have undermined previous biblically based reconstructions.²⁰ Change did not happen overnight, nor did the movement occur at the same pace everywhere as Weippert (1988: 26–7) and Dothan (1989: 1–14; 1992: 93–8) have emphasized. Regional variations ensured different rates of development across Palestine, and were characterized by a complex process in which indigenous, Philistine, and Egyptian cultures overlapped and interacted (Mazar 1992: 260).²¹ Thus, this transformation needs to be viewed in regional perspective, as Finkelstein and Na'aman (1994: 13) have noted, since the particular ecological, economic, and demographic background of different regions, including the mountains of the Galilee, the fertile intermontane valleys of the northern hill country, the semi-arid Beersheba valley, or the arid Judaeian desert, profoundly affected the rate and nature of development.

The response to the disruption and dislocations of the Late Bronze Age was a sweeping shift in settlement location into the highlands and steppes with the growth of hundreds of small rural villages in those regions that had been sparsely populated in the Late Bronze Age and were removed from the direct control of the major towns. The countryside became dotted with hundreds of small unwallled villages, most newly established in the twelfth century, arranged in a variety of patterns, with many located on hilltops near arable lands.²² The appearance and use of pillared buildings, silos, cisterns, terracing, and utilitarian pottery forms, such as the distinctive collared-rim ware, are explicable in terms of the topographical and environmental conditions facing the inhabitants of highland and marginal settlements in the context of the disruption of local and regional economies (Whitelam 1994; Finkelstein 1995; see also Dever 1991: 83–4). Importantly, such material features also indicate that the distinctive demographic and settlement response to the disruptions at the end of the Late Bronze Age were largely indigenous rather than primarily the result of ethnic changes in the region. The attempt has long been to explain the settlement shift and revival in ethnic terms, attributing the resurgence to Israelites. Although the Merneptah stele indicates that some entity called Israel was in the region during the Late Bronze to Iron Age transition, its precise nature, location, and contribution to the settlement shift is impossible to gauge on the basis of available evidence (Whitelam 1994; Finkelstein 1998: 15).²³ Recent scholarship has recognized that the archaeological

data confirm that the settlement shift was a largely indigenous response to the strains at the end of the Late Bronze Age rather than the result of some new ethnic entity coming from outside Palestine's boundaries. As Finkelstein (1995: 359) notes, 'what has been said above clearly indicates that the material culture of the Iron Age I sites in the highlands should not be viewed in terms of ethnic perspectives (contra Dever 1993). It rather reflects the ecological background, the subsistence economy and the social frameworks of these highland communities . . .'.

Such a view is further confirmed by the fact that many different regions from southern Europe, through Greece, Anatolia, and Syria-Palestine witnessed similar settlement shifts as a response to the disruption of the Mediterranean basin. Central and south-eastern Europe in the twelfth century witnessed a proliferation of small rural settlements, comprising a few buildings with silos for grain storage, situated on good agricultural land and devoted to farming and herding (Wells 1992: 33). The shift in settlement away from the exposed lowlands to the protection of the highlands is similarly reported from Greece to Syria (Desborough 1972: 19-20, 82, 88; Caubert 1992; McClellan 1992: 164; Sader 1992: 161; Yon 1992: 111-20). The revival of early Iron Age Palestine in the countryside appears to have been part of a wider regional response by rural pastoral groups to the decline or disruption of towns and their associated regional and interregional economies. As such, it reveals the rhythms and patterns of Palestinian history throughout centuries borne on the backs of the peasantry and their produce rather than representing the emergence of a new ethnic group and a radical break with the past (see Coote and Whitelam 1987; Finkelstein 1995; Levy and Holl 1995).

The survey data have revealed that the reordering of the countryside began in those areas easiest to colonize, which provided good agricultural land and conditions most suited to herding and grain growing.²⁴ The greatest density of settlement was to be found in the northern hill country with its fertile intermontane valleys decreasing significantly as it approached the steeper, more rugged western flanks of the southern hills. Similarly, the eastern desert fringes provided much greater settlement potential compared with the less hospitable western slopes. Significantly, the less hospitable southern hill country and the western slopes that required considerable investment in the opening of new land, and was most suited to long-term cultivation of olives and vines, did not experience similar density of settlement until the Iron II period. The increasing pressure of numbers required new land and the opportunities offered by the development of more specialized agricultural strategies such as fruit and olive production. These ecological frontier zones have always been highly sensitive, often being the first to suffer in times of settlement crisis and the last to be repopulated when the economy revives (Finkelstein 1995: 353-4). The fact that such a response is not the result of new ethnic groups in the area, particularly understood in the past as the result of Israelites coming from outside, is revealed in that similar patterns of settlement as a response to the dislocations of the Late Bronze Age, exhibiting a remarkably similar material culture, are also found in Transjordan, with settlement focused in the north and decreasing towards the ecologically more sensitive south.²⁵

The pattern of settlement, however, does not reveal the direction from which the inhabitants of these villages came, but indicates that it was a response to the limits

of the possible as part of the realignment of Iron Age Palestine (see Ofer 1994: 107–9). Furthermore, such settlement shifts are not unique in the history of Palestine, but reveal the patterns and rhythms of its history over many centuries (Coote and Whitelam 1987). Many of the Iron I villages in the hill country, such as Tell en-Nasbeh, Khirbet Rabud, and Khirbet Raddanah, had been occupied in the Early Bronze Age, with 116 of the 254 Iron I sites of the central hill country having been occupied in the Middle Bronze period, but abandoned in the Late Bronze Age: 'It is, therefore, more reasonable to explain these settlement fluctuations in terms of socio-economic change, that is shifts towards a more sedentary or a more pastoral society, in accordance with political, economic and social transformations' (Finkelstein 1995: 355; see also Whitelam 1994). The direction of settlement emerging from the analyses of recent survey and excavation data appears to have been dictated much more by the possibilities offered by the most opportune agricultural land in the north and eastern desert fringes and the location of springs and gullies rather than the movement of groups across the boundaries of Palestine.²⁶ The spread of settlement to the south and west followed later as the weight of numbers created a more pressing need for access to ecologically sensitive areas.

The important point is that the realignment and reinvigoration of Iron Age Palestine began in the countryside. Although the response was not uniform throughout the country, the pattern revealed by regional surveys is reasonably clear. The reordering of the countryside began in those regions most suited to agriculture and grazing and gradually expanded towards the ecological frontiers. The reshaping of Palestine emerged from this process of internal colonization, the need for crop cultivation and animal grazing, in which formerly abandoned villages and their territories were reclaimed, while the old boundaries were pushed back to open up more ecologically sensitive regions and those that required long-term investment in the production of olives and vines. Although the surveys have revealed considerable regional variation, it was from within the delicate balance and continuum between peasants and pastoral groups that the revival began, leading over centuries to the transformation and realignment of Iron Age Palestine.²⁷ This continuum between town, countryside, and pastoralism, a constant in the history of Palestine through the ages – part of the inertia of the past – hides the dynamic shifting political, economic, and social relationships that carry along the history of the region. The increasing archaeological data have revealed a past, significantly different from that presented by the biblical traditions and reconstructions that rely on them, of a system adapting and gradually responding over centuries to the threats and disruption that reverberated through the Mediterranean basin at the end of the Late Bronze Age. The drastic reduction of the world of the towns in the Late Bronze Age must have exerted enormous economic pressure on agricultural and pastoral groups, which led to the reordering of the countryside. Yet it was from this world, the world of peasants and pastoralists, that towns would be revived and repopulated later in the period.

The fortunes of towns at the end of the Late Bronze Age, the destruction or abandonment of many towns mainly in the lowlands and coastal plain, alongside the disappearance of Mycenaean and Cypriot pottery, was seen as evidence that trade, the very lifeblood of the towns as Braudel termed it, had ceased. Yet, beside the

evidence of severe dislocation of the eastern Mediterranean system, there are still some signs of vitality in the economy and life of the towns during the Late Bronze to Iron Age transition and beyond. It is clear that the extensive trade networks of the Late Bronze Age were disrupted: as Mazar (1992: 300) notes, finds from Iron I sites reflect isolation and interruption of international relations. But all signs of life and vitality were not erased. Muhly (1992: 19) argues that Mediterranean trade, especially the economy of Cyprus, expanded around 1250–1150 BCE: 'Not a world dominated by sea raiders, pirates, and freebooting mercenaries, living off booty and plunder, but a world of enterprising merchants and traders, exploiting new economic opportunities, new markets, and new sources of raw materials. A world taking the first tentative steps that were to lead, in the centuries ahead, to the great Greek and Phoenician expansion of the Orientalizing period.'²⁸ Sader (1992: 161) too claims that internal trade is also evident with the discovery of Phoenician bichrome ware at Megiddo, Tel Qasile, Philistia, and Tel Masos in the northern Negev, as well as lower Egypt, suggesting continuing contacts, particularly along the Phoenician coast (Mazar 1992: 300). The distribution of Philistine ware at Beersheba and Tel Masos in northern Negev, Megiddo and Tell Qiri in the Jezreel Valley, and as far north as Tel Dan, as well as 'Midianite' ware and Cypriot pottery at Megiddo and Tel Qasile, indicate that not all internal trade links had been severed.

The disruption occupies a century or more and is reflected in the varying fortunes of different towns over an extended period testifying to the rhythms of Palestine history. The rebuilding of a number of the towns destroyed towards the end of the Late Bronze Age, albeit in reduced circumstances, suggests that not all vitality had been extinguished. While the destruction and impoverishment of a major town such as Hazor, or the abandonment of Taanach and Lachish, illustrates the problems, the survival or recovery of Megiddo and Bethshan in the lowlands and coastal plain, or Tel Sera and Tell el-Farah South in the northern Negev, suggests important signs of vitality within the system (Mazar 1992: 261). Similarly, Weinstein (1992: 142; see also Bunimowitz 1994: 201–2) reports that archaeology has revealed an extensive Egyptian presence in southern Palestine and the Jezreel Valley, suggesting continued economic vigour. Similar signs of vitality are indicated by the founding of sites on the southern coastal plain, traditionally associated with Philistine settlement and control. The development of Tel Qasile, or the recovery and growth of such sites as Tel Miqne, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, and Dor, suggests a continuation or at least revival of shipping and trade, albeit drastically reduced from its height during the Late Bronze Age.

Thus, although the revival of Palestine began in the countryside, this should not be taken to suggest that the towns of the region and their economies had collapsed completely and were moribund. The archaeological surveys and excavations have revealed a complex picture showing wide regional variation to the stresses and strains placed upon Palestine at the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. These signs of vitality were to grow stronger as the period progressed.

THE REORDERING OF THE COUNTRYSIDE: THE GROWTH OF TOWNS IN IRON II

Only with the increasing weight of numbers throughout the early Iron Age were the limits of the possible approached. It was the increasing population in Iron I, rather than technological innovations, as thought by earlier scholars, that allowed the colonization of the highlands and steppes.²⁹ As noted above, settlement in Iron I took place in the areas easiest to master for subsistence, and only as numbers increased were the less hospitable zones tackled. The space had always been there but the weight of numbers called for its utilization (cf. Braudel 1974: 18). The end of Iron I, with its expansion of agricultural settlements throughout the highlands and steppes of Palestine, and the beginning of Iron II saw a growth in towns, many with fortifications, testifying to the result of the weight of numbers. The reordering of the countryside led to the revival and growth of towns throughout the region, which once again began to reclaim the hinterland and its produce. Thus it is commonplace to characterize the Iron II as an 'urban period' (Barkay 1992: 304; Mazar 1990: 371–5; Finkelstein 1994: 149). The phrase is misleading if it suggests a comparison with modern urban phenomena since the majority of the towns in Palestine were relatively small, catering for only a few hundred to a few thousand inhabitants, and dependent largely upon agricultural produce from the immediate vicinity (see Hopkins 1997: 301–4; Lemche 1997: 329–30).

The increasing population placed pressure on existing space and resources and with the revival of the towns pushed Palestine towards critical thresholds. The balance of power between town and countryside changed throughout the period, resulting eventually in the dramatic increase in the size of a number of sites such as Samaria, Jerusalem, Ekron, and Ashdod. Such demographic pressures inevitably increase and exaggerate social stratification and this, alongside the increasing dominance of such highland settlements as Samaria and Jerusalem, resulted in the development of a series of small statelike structures throughout the region. Traditionally, this has been seen as the period of the Judaeans and Israelite monarchies following the development of a major state under David and Solomon centred on Jerusalem in the tenth century BCE. How early such state structures formed, their nature, and extent is now one of the most contested areas between biblical specialists, archaeologists, and historians.

The survey data once again reveal important regional patterns in the rhythms of Palestinian history in the Iron II period. Finkelstein (1998: 32; 1995: 355) notes that a dramatic expansion in settlement took place in Iron II in the central hill country with a doubling of sites from 254 in Iron I to 520, accompanied by a tripling of occupied area.³⁰ Just as the less hospitable Judaeans hills south of Jerusalem provided an important barometer of settlement in the early Iron Age, so its transformation in the Iron II period illustrates the effects of the increasing weight of numbers. Jerusalem, supposedly the capital of an Israelite state in the early tenth century under David according to biblically based reconstructions, was little more than a small isolated town in the tenth century BCE, reflecting the lack of population in the immediate vicinity. However, by the end of the Iron II period it had grown significantly, covering around 150 acres. Judah became dotted with dozens

of rural towns and villages, in close proximity. During the last two centuries of the Iron II period Judah, the Judaeen desert, and the northern Negev had gone some way to reaching their carrying capacity. Though some Iron I sites were abandoned in the eleventh century – Izbet Sartah, Giloh, Khirbet Raddana, and Ai – the majority of the Iron I sites in the hill country continued to be occupied throughout the Iron Age. Ofer (1994: 106) reports that the hill country of Judah in the Iron II saw an increase in settlement into all parts of the Judaeen hills: settlement increased from 86 small or very small sites in the ninth century BCE to 122 sites, with a built-up area of 92.6 hectares, in the eighth century. In the eighth to seventh centuries BCE settlement in Judah reached its peak with settlement in the arid zones and the number of towns in the Judaeen hills and Shephelah at an unprecedented level, surpassed only in the Byzantine period when the region enjoyed its greatest density of settlement prior to the modern period.³¹ Similarly, sites in the northern Negev – Tel Ira, Aroer, Tel Masos, Tel Mulhata, and Beersheba – prospered, particularly in the seventh century BCE (Herzog 1994: 143–4; Holladay 1995: 386), while the Palestinian littoral and lowlands continued to experience an expansion of settlement and the revival of its towns with the rebuilding of Tel Qasile, Dor, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza in the coastal plain, Betshan and Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley, and Gezer and Lachish in the Shephelah (Mazar 1990: 389).

The Iron II expansion is traditionally attributed to the development of an Israelite monarchy by David and Solomon, particularly at the end of Iron I, followed by the competing states of Judah and Israel centred on Jerusalem and Samaria respectively. Barkay is typical in describing the tenth century as ‘the period of the United Monarchy’ (1992: 305) or ‘a high point in Israelite history, a period of economic and cultural prosperity, of peace, fondly remembered in later times’ (1992: 305).³² Similarly, Fritz (1994: 149) equates the destruction or abandonment of various sites at the end of Iron I with increasing centralization under David.³³ Such standard presentations of a golden age of the ‘United Monarchy’ under David and Solomon rest upon the correlation and interpretation of archaeological results with the biblical traditions. The discovery of monumental architecture, fortified gate complexes, and casemate walls at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer was dated to the Solomonic period on the basis of the description in 1 Kings 9:15 of Solomon’s building programme. The debate on the dating of remains from the tenth century BCE, including such structures, is now one of the most critical problems facing archaeologists, and thereby historians, and has profound implications for understanding the history of Iron Age Palestine.

The idea of a major state, let alone an empire, centred on Jerusalem in the tenth century BCE, and the biblically based reconstruction of the reigns of David and Solomon, have been increasingly disputed in recent years as each element of a once seemingly interlocking network of ideas has been re-examined.³⁴ What began as a critique from within biblical studies, marginalized at first as a radical movement, has now been strengthened by serious questions raised by archaeological specialists (see Jamieson-Duke 1991; Davies 1992; Gelinas 1995; Finkelstein 1996, 1998; Prag 1998: 158). The view that the gate-complexes were built to ‘a single blueprint’, thereby suggesting the existence of centralized state planning, has been undermined by questions of their dating and differences in the size, construction, and type of

wall to which they are bonded (Barkay 1992: 307; Hopkins 1997: 303). Thus Hopkins (1997: 303) concludes that 'there is precious little indication of regional integration in the archaeological record' for the Solomonic period.³⁵ While the dating and interpretation of the so-called 'Solomonic' gates at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer has become the area of most spectacular disagreement, the interpretation of Pharaoh Shishaq's campaign into Palestine, central to the tenth-century dating of destruction layers at particular sites, has also been challenged (Davies 1992: 42–73; Thompson 1992: 306–7; Gelinas 1995: 230–3). Barkay, for example, argues that it has not been proven that any sites were destroyed by Shishaq in 925 BCE and that 'the attribution of destruction levels to the end of the tenth century at many sites is mere conjecture' (1992: 307).³⁶ Furthermore, sites in the Negev previously thought to represent part of a network of royal fortifications are now the subject of re-evaluation (Barkay 1992: 323–5).³⁷

The existence of a significant state in the early Iron Age, which has long been at the very heart of biblically based reconstructions of Iron Age Palestine, is now in serious question. There is a growing recognition that Jerusalem in the tenth century, far from being the capital of an extensive united monarchy, or even an 'empire' on some accounts, was little more than a small highland town.³⁸ Not until the later Iron II did its fortunes change significantly. The growing consensus is that state structures developed first in northern Israel around Samaria in the ninth century and only later in southern Judah around Jerusalem in the eighth century, as reflected in the revival of towns and the increasing growth of first Samaria and then Jerusalem as the Iron II period progresses (Jamieson-Drake 1991; Thompson 1992; Finkelstein 1998). Yet, even arguments for the existence of Judahite and Israelite states in these later periods must be tempered by questions about the nature and degree of centralization they achieved. As Hopkins (1997: 304) notes, these 'replicated the city-states of the Bronze Age to a far greater extent than they anticipated the nations of the European Industrial Age. The nationalist ideology of the biblical literature projects a unity that simply did not exist economically or sociologically.'³⁹ He makes the important point that ancient Israel and Judah were not a society 'so much as a constellation of "plural societies"' and that its nature and structure was inherited from the Bronze Age urban centres ('city-states') with a small elite 'sustained by an agricultural and pastoral hinterland' (Hopkins 1997: 304). In this sense, the position of Samaria and Jerusalem in the ninth and eighth centuries as they took advantage of the reordering and revitalization of the countryside ought to be compared more closely with the so-called 'city-states' of the Middle Bronze II period rather than seen as some revolutionary development in the history of the region.⁴⁰

The degree of centralization and the extent of the development of statelike structures is a question that is only now beginning to be addressed in the light of the collapse of the previous paradigm, which assumed the existence, and so continuity with, a major centralized state in the region from the tenth century BCE onwards. The reappraisal of biblically based reconstructions, which has raised serious questions about the Late Bronze to Iron Age transition and the nature of the tenth century BCE, or the full implications of the redating Finkelstein has proposed, has not fully impacted upon the study of the Iron II period. The focus of attention of our standard histories of the region, 'the period of the divided monarchy', as it is traditionally

termed in biblically based histories, is fixed upon the events and characters – Omri, Ahab, Josiah, and so on – named in the biblical traditions, as well as in Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions. But it is the rhythms of Palestinian history, the revival of the countryside, and its produce and labour, on which the exploits of such named individuals are borne. The emergence of highland powers in Samaria, and later Jerusalem, form part of the general process of the reordering of the countryside and the pressures and changes that invariably take place as carrying capacity is approached.

The fortunes of these and other towns, of course, varied with inevitable periods of expansion or contraction. Towns began to thrive due to surplus production from the countryside, whether as the centre of regional markets or through redistribution and taxation. The Samaria and Arad ostraca, and the famous royal-jar handle stamps, testify to the redistribution of flour, oil, and wine during the Iron II and hence the vitality of the economy. The pressure of the weight of numbers to open and clear new land, the investment in terracing, and the growing markets of the towns and reviving economy witnessed an increasing commitment to large-scale horticulture, which is revealed in the development of the olive oil industry in Iron II Palestine. The growth of olive oil production is one of the most spectacular illustrations of the revival and reinvigoration of Iron Age Palestine.⁴¹ Olive presses have been found in Judah and the Shephelah and at small farms on the western slopes of the mountains of Ephraim. The way in which the revitalization of the countryside benefited towns is illustrated most spectacularly at Tel Miqne where over 100 olive presses have been found throughout the houses at the site. By the seventh century BCE Tel Miqne had expanded almost fivefold, from around 4 to 20 hectares, as a result of its central importance in this lucrative industry. Similarly, nearby Tel Batash was able to benefit from the vitality of horticulture. The discovery of ‘industrial’ and residential quarters at both sites, along with Ashdod, is a further pointer to the continuing vitality of the economy. Leaving aside the disputed dating of their fortifications, the importance of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer was that they controlled vital trade routes to Syria or through the Esdraelon Valley and northern Shephelah. The revival of international trade is indicated by the small amounts of Cypriot imports at a few Palestinian sites from the mid-eleventh century BCE onwards, with increasing evidence of imported materials as the period progresses.

Such economic vitality and growth inevitably brought the attention of Assyria from the ninth century BCE onwards, and later Babylonia, as trade revived throughout the Mediterranean basin. This was a reimposition of imperial control over Palestine given its strategic location within the trade nexus. Traditional biblically based reconstructions tell the political history of ancient Israel for this period, and the struggle of the small state structures and their rulers in the region with the imperial powers of Mesopotamia (see Noth 1960; Bright 1981; Miller and Hayes 1986). The destruction of Samaria and Lachish by the Assyrians in the late eighth century BCE appears to have resulted in the rise to prominence of Ekron and Jerusalem. However, despite the concentration of biblically based reconstructions on the subjugation of Samaria and northern Israel and the constriction of Jerusalem and Judah, Assyrian economic and political interests led to the development of trade contacts between Edom, Judah, and the coast through the Negev, and continued later.⁴²

As has been noted, Judah experienced a major expansion from 900–700 BCE, particularly in the seventh century.

Similarly, Mazar (1990) notes that Transjordan experienced prosperity and economic growth during the Assyrian and Babylonian periods because of the need to protect the trade route through Transjordan to Arabia: most of the Iron Age sites in the region relate to the prosperous period of the Assyrian and Babylonian domination from the late eighth to the early sixth century BCE. The situation towards the end of the Iron Age is less clear, with the defeat of Judah by the Babylonians. Again, biblically based reconstructions have tended to focus upon the plight of Jerusalem and its immediate environs as well as the theological and political effects of the ending of the Davidic dynasty, the loss of the temple, and the loss of political autonomy. Barkay (1992: 372) acknowledges that the effects, however, were localized, with material continuity in many areas of Palestine outside the confines of Jerusalem and its immediate vicinity. The fact that such regional variation has only relatively recently become apparent again illustrates the concentration of attention on a small subregion due to the overwhelming interest in the Hebrew Bible. Hoglund (1991) reports that there was a dramatic drop in the number of settlements from Iron II to the Persian period, reflecting a process of urbanization or depopulation. The Judaeian territory was an exception to this pattern with a 25 per cent increase in the number of sites, the vast majority of which were small unwallled settlements.⁴³

Once again it is possible to see important regional variation in response to the events of the sixth century with a reordering of the countryside, particularly in Judah. Ofer (1994: 105–6) reports that at the end of the Iron Age, during the seventh and early sixth centuries, there were 133 settlements with 71.5 hectares of built-up area in the southern hill country. Again the southern border of the region retreated during a time of political instability as settlement almost died out during the transition to the Persian period and was considerably weakened in the central region, but increased by 65 per cent in the north compared with the preceding period. Site location, as in earlier periods of instability, appears to have been determined by access to good agricultural land, water sources, and main routes. The location of small sites on higher places tends to suggest a concern for security in response to regional circumstances. However, the continued vitality of sites along the Phoenician coast and in the lowlands, such as at Tell Keisan in the valley of Acre, suggests that the reinvigoration of trade throughout the Babylonian and Persian empires benefited Palestinian sites able to exploit the trade routes through their strategic location.

Thus the end of the Iron Age in Palestine again illustrates the rhythms and patterns of its history, the differing responses of its fragmented landscape and its inhabitants to the deep-seated movements of history. While biblically based constructions focus upon the glare of political events in and around Jerusalem and the theological and political consequences of the Babylonian capture of the city, increasing archaeological data reveal the silent world that guides the history of the region. What is beginning to emerge is a greater understanding of the complex responses of the inhabitants of Palestine throughout the Iron Age to the economic and political realities of this ancient world – a picture significantly different from the priorities that govern the way in which the biblical writers, and modern ‘biblical historians’ who rely almost exclusively on these accounts, present this world.

CONCLUSION

Viewed from a wider perspective, freed from the constraints of biblical history, the Iron Age in Palestine represents an integral part of the complex history of the region, as archaeologists have increasingly demonstrated.⁴⁴ The simplistic representation of the Iron Age in Palestine as encircled, at its beginning and end, by catastrophic collapse and decline represents, in Schama's terms, a distraction caused by concentration on such 'sudden moments of realization'. These periods of dislocation at the transition points into and from the Iron Age do not define some discrete period in the history Palestine but are integrally connected to the oscillations in settlement that precede and follow. The processes that contribute to and emerge from these seemingly sudden moments, the complex regional variations, are gradually being uncovered and appreciated by archaeologists and historians. As scholars have come to appreciate increasingly the cyclical nature of Palestinian history (Coote and Whitelam 1987; Finkelstein 1995, 1998; Levy and Holl 1995), so perceptions of Iron Age Palestine have begun to change quite significantly. These six centuries or so illustrate the rhythms and patterns of Palestinian history in general. Within these rhythms, history is never completely static despite the massive inertia of the ancient past: 'It has gentle slopes along which the whole mechanism slides' (Braudel 1974: xi). As Braudel (1974: x) has remarked of Europe, 'the frontier zone between possibility and impossibility barely moved in any significant way, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. It was only successfully crossed in the last years of the eighteenth century, and then only at a few points. It was the following century that saw a violent breakthrough, revolution, total upheaval of the world.' This is even more applicable to Palestine in the Iron Age when the boundaries of possibility were even more rigidly defined. The physical boundaries of the arid and semi-arid zones were sensitive barometers in the history of the region. The revival and reinvigoration of Palestine that emerged from the disruption and dislocations of the late Bronze Age pushed back these boundaries as the weight of numbers opened up and reclaimed the less hospitable subregions, but the limits of the possible were able to reassert themselves in other periods of political and economic uncertainty.

The end of the period brought renewed interest from the demographically more dominant powers in Mesopotamia due to the increasing prosperity through the revived international and interregional trade. The pattern, which is common throughout the history of Palestine, reasserts itself. Again the close of the period has traditionally been presented as one of decline after the defeat of the southern kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians. However, recent surveys have begun to reveal important regional differences that undermine the myopia of standard accounts based solely on the biblical traditions. The transformation and reinvigoration of Palestine throughout the Iron Age bears witness to the ebb and flow of the tides of history to which this region has always been sensitive, given its strategic location in the geopolitical scheme of things. Once again at the end of the period, historians and archaeologists are beginning to appreciate the differing regional responses to the political and economic crisis of the Babylonian period, including a reordering of the Judaeian countryside in response to the decline of Jerusalem.

NOTES

- 1 See Whitelam (1996: 37–70) for an introduction to some of the problems of defining chronological and geographical boundaries in Palestinian history. Gordon (1992: 192), for example, notes the artificial separation of Phoenician coast and its towns from the history of Palestine.
- 2 Davies (1992: 24) points out that the term ‘the biblical period’ should be reserved for the period when the biblical literature was composed in the Second Temple period rather than for the Iron Age as the time to which much of the literature refers. He contrasts ‘the biblical period’ with the ‘classical’ age of the Israelite and Judaeon monarchies (1998: 3).
- 3 Drews (1993: 3) is illustrative of this approach in his categorization of the end of the Bronze Age in the eastern Mediterranean as ‘one of history’s most frightful turning points’, which he terms ‘the Catastrophe’, a beginning rather than an end, yet signalling a radical break with what had gone before. Hallo (1992: 1) similarly points to changes in writing systems, political organization, and increasing urbanization as representing a significant break with the past. The classic statement of Israelite history as ‘the pinnacle of biological evolution’ can be found in Albright (1957: esp. 121–2).
- 4 The most recent and comprehensive statement of the difficulties in trying to use the biblical traditions for historical reconstruction can be found in Thompson (1999). See also the collection of essays in Grabbe (1997).
- 5 Hallo (1992: 2, 6) asks the question of whether or not Bronze and Iron are merely labels of convenience rather than the crucial components of tools and weapons. However, he goes on to add that the shift in metal use was fairly rapid: ‘we can therefore justify the use of the term Iron Age as a label of convenience for a period whose characteristics – whether metallurgical or otherwise – do not fully come into their own until two centuries after its beginning’.
- 6 The scheme for subdividing the Iron Age was proposed by Aharoni and Amiran following excavations at Hazor (Tell el-Qedar) in 1958 (see Mazar 1992: 258–301). The absolute chronology of Iron Age Palestine is dependent upon Egyptian chronology (see Mazar 1992: 259 for high and low Egyptian chronologies). Amiran divided the period into two phases: Iron I (1200–1000 BCE) and Iron II (1000–586 BCE), while Aharoni and Amiran subsequently subdivided Iron II into Iron II (1000–840 BCE) and Iron III (840–586 BCE). However, in Avi-Yonah (1975) there is a further refinement, with Iron IIa (1000–900 BCE), Iron IIb (900–800 BCE), and Iron IIc (800–586 BCE). Barkay (1992: 305) has recently suggested a further refinement into Iron IIa (1000–800 BCE), Iron IIb (800–700 BCE), Iron IIa (700–586 BCE) and Iron IIb (586–late sixth century BCE). Finkelstein and Na’aman (1994: 16) emphasize the fluidity of the chronological divisions in their designation of the Late Bronze Age as ranging from 1550 to 1200/1150 BCE, thus providing a half-century ‘overlap’ between the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Such terminology is confusing and subject to considerable debate. This has been brought out most clearly in recent years with the intense debate on the dating of tenth-century remains and their relationship to the biblical traditions. The controversial attempts by Israel Finkelstein (1996, 1998) to redefine the period from an archaeological perspective, and the response by Mazar (1997), illustrate how biblical presuppositions have been built into standard representations of the Iron Age in Palestine. Finkelstein (1998: 167) characterizes the disputes as ‘much more than a dispute over the dating of strata and pottery assemblages in the main mounds of Palestine; it is part of a quest to emancipate Iron Age archaeology from Bible archaeology’. No chronological scheme can ever hope to achieve the amount of precision suggested by the standard representations of Iron Age Palestine: the risk is that such precision, however qualified, distracts from the continuities and seeming inertia of vast sweeps of time in the history of the region.
- 7 Barkay (1992: 302), for instance, considers the Iron II–III to be ‘a historical era in the fullest sense of the word’ with the Bible providing the ‘principal historical source’: it is appropriate to use the term ‘biblical archaeology’. The chronology of the Iron II–III is based on synchronisms between references in the Bible and other sources to the destruction and construction of cities and excavations of foundation phases and destruction layers at these cities (Barkay 1992: 304). Barkay terms the 460 years between the establishment of the monarchy of David

- and the conquest by the Persians as Iron Age II–III, or ‘the Late Israelite period’ (1992: 304). Although he recognizes that the Israelites were not the ‘sole ethnic entity’ in the land, the term is used to subsume the history of the region. Contrast the statements in Finkelstein (1996, 1998).
- 8 Braudel (1972: 21) goes on to warn that ‘resounding events are often only momentary outbursts, surface manifestations of these larger movements and explicable only in terms of them’.
 - 9 Weinstein (1981; see also Bunimowitz 1994: 195) has demonstrated that Egypt tried to maintain its interest in and control of Palestine into the twelfth century BCE, probably until the time of Rameses VI (c. 1143–1136 BCE). Singer (1994: 284–94) describes the final stages of Egyptian control of Canaan, noting that during the reign of Rameses III the archaeological evidence points to the fact that it strengthened its control of the southern trade routes through the lowlands.
 - 10 The Canaanite jar, which was used for transporting much of the produce, is found in Greece, while Egyptian wall paintings depict the unloading of such jars and produce (Gonen 1992: 246–9).
 - 11 Cline (1994: xvii–xviii) notes that during the Late Bronze period there is no clear domination of Aegean trade routes by any one foreign power. Objects from Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Cyprus, and Italy are found in approximately equal quantities. Cline (1994: 100–1) argues that the Ulu Burun (Kas) shipwreck illustrates the international nature of cargoes carried by merchant ships in the Late Bronze Age and represents a microcosm of trade in the Aegean, Egypt, and the Near East. Similarly, Bass (1986, 1987) maintains that the cargo reflects the international world of the ancient Near East illustrated in the Amarna Letters.
 - 12 Thompson (1992: 215; 1999: 155–61) has revived the argument that climatic change was an important factor in the transformation of Palestine at the end of the Late Bronze Age. Hallo (1992: 2) points out that all such theories rely upon the chance recording of essentially perennial factors: earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, global warming or cooling, endemic pestilence, famine, and flooding. Famine is well documented throughout the region from the biblical traditions to documents from Hattusha, Ugarit, and Egypt which indicate that there were extreme food shortages (Na’aman 1994: 243). It should be noted that famine has multiple causes, often the consequence of human action, rather than simply being a direct result of inclement weather conditions.
 - 13 Muhly (1992: 10–11) discusses how perceptions of this so-called ‘Dark Age’ have changed. See the wide-ranging essays in Ward and Joukowsky (1992) for a re-evaluation of the period throughout the region, including southern Europe and Mesopotamia.
 - 14 Na’aman (1994: 235–9) provides a good description, based on inscriptional evidence from Mesopotamia, of the dislocation throughout Syria and southern Anatolia.
 - 15 See Dever (1992: 99–101) for questions about which sites demonstrate evidence of destruction.
 - 16 The definition and interpretation of Philistine culture has become an important issue in understanding the transition from the Late Bronze into the Iron Age in Palestine in recent years. Bunimowitz (1990), Bunimowitz and Yasur-Landau (1996), and Singer (1994: 300–1) highlight the problems in trying to define Philistine culture, particularly in ethnic terms.
 - 17 The same is true of the Middle Bronze to Late Bronze transition, where the major sites of the region and periphery were not devastated contemporaneously but during a process that lasted from the end of the seventeenth to the middle/end of the sixteenth century BCE (Bunimowitz 1994: 184–5). As Bunimowitz (1994: 186) notes, ‘the repeated disintegration of the social fabric of the hill country during the Bronze Age is of special interest due to the fact that it happened under similar environmental and demographic conditions’.
 - 18 Convenient surveys of older approaches can be found in Miller (1977), Ramsey (1982), Chaney (1988), H. and M. Weippert (1991), and Thompson (1992).
 - 19 Finkelstein (1994: 158–9) argues that the pace of growth in the total built-up area in all sites in the northern hill country for early Iron I to late Iron I cannot be explained by natural population growth. Rather it shows that new elements either came from outside the region or were from a pastoral background, continuing to settle during the twelfth to eleventh

- centuries BCE. Finkelstein argues for the latter on the grounds that in the Late Bronze Age a large number of pastoral groups were active in the hill country.
- 20 Davies (1992) and Brettler (1995) review the convergence of factors, such as new literary studies and increasing interest in social history, that have contributed to the paradigm shift within biblical studies.
- 21 T. Dothan (1992) argues that the complex process and cultural changes that took place were not applicable to all sites. Although Dothan (1992: 93) tries to tie the changes to ethnic explanations, she demonstrates the complexity of the social dislocation in citing the juxtaposition of continuity at some sites of facets of Canaanite culture, the signs at other sites of temporarily intensified Egyptian presence, the appearance and expansion of hill country, which she and many others attribute to the Israelites, and the establishment of Philistine and other Sea Peoples' enclaves along the coast, indicating that the cultural coherence of Late Bronze Age Canaanite society had broken down. The fact that at 'Philistine' sites Philistine pottery was only a small percentage of the overall repertoire that showed clear continuities with Late Bronze Age material culture suggests that such changes cannot easily be reduced to simple ethnic differences and the influx of foreign populations.
- 22 Dever (1992: 104) provides a convenient description of these settlements, while Mazar (1992: 287–92) outlines the material culture of these villages and some of the regional variations. See also Finkelstein (1988) and Fritz (1995: 68–72) for the arrangement of these villages.
- 23 One of the most striking shifts in scholarly perceptions in recent years is the acceptance that the rural settlements were largely indigenous rather than the result of external infiltration or invasion by Israelite tribes. The discussion on much of this material has been sidetracked by attempts to correlate the archaeological data with ethnic groups, particularly in the search for ancient Israel. The question of whether or not the inhabitants of these rural settlements were Israelites or 'proto-Israelites' has become a matter of considerable debate (see Whitelam 1994, 1996; Finkelstein 1995; Dever 1996; among many others). Finkelstein (1995: 365) suggests that the absence of pig bones in Iron I hill country settlements, although they are found in significant numbers in the Bronze Age and in the lowlands and Transjordan in Iron I, may point to a pig taboo and thus may indicate that the villagers were Israelites. However, compare the cautious remarks of Hesse (1990), Hesse and Wapnish (1997), and Prag (1998) on the many factors affecting pig production. What is important for understanding the history of the region are the processes at work, the continuities and discontinuities, in the settlement shift. The question of self-identification is important but difficult to resolve given the current level of information.
- 24 For the results and analysis of the surveys by Finkelstein, Gal, Ofer, Herzog, and Zertal, see the essays in Finkelstein and Na'aman (1994), and particularly Finkelstein's synthetic treatments (1995, 1998).
- 25 See Bienkowski (1992: 1–12; 1998: 164) for a useful overview of the problems of ceramic dating and the identification of Iron I settlement in Transjordan.
- 26 For details on the distribution of settlement, and some differences of opinion, see Finkelstein (1994, 1995, 1998), Gal (1994), Ofer (1994), Zertal (1994), Herzog (1994), and Frankel (1994).
- 27 See Lemche (1985) and Coote and Whitelam (1987) for the complexities of the social continuum in ancient Palestine and the complex interrelationships between pastoral and agricultural communities. The pastoral sector never disappears completely, since the economy of urban and nomad populations is interconnected and the two coexist at all times (Na'aman 1994: 233).
- 28 Rutter (1992: 61) also argues that 'in terms of its forms of material cultural expression, the post-palatial Aegean world is clearly anything but moribund. Much of the disparagement of the post-palatial era as a period of cultural decline results from what amounts to the decisive and permanent abandonment in that period of those forms of earlier material culture which were concentrated with the social and economic order maintained through the royal citadels.' Wells (1992: 38) sees the changes taking place in central and south-eastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean as part of the general process of economic transformation in the Late Bronze Age and the reorientation of trade routes. Mazar (1992: 297) describes the vitality of

- Tel Abu Hawam, Tell Keisan, and Akhziv along the Phoenician coast, particularly in the eleventh century BCE.
- 29 The transformation of the Iron Age has often been explained in terms of innovations such as the introduction of iron, slaked-lime plaster cisterns, terracing, or even particular types of architecture or pottery, as though these were on a par with the agricultural revolution. However, the use of terracing or cisterns in earlier periods indicates that these were appropriate responses to prevailing socio-environmental conditions, rather than technological breakthroughs in the Iron I period or Israelite innovations, as thought earlier (see Finkelstein 1995: 364–5).
 - 30 Finkelstein and Na'aman (1994: 11) report that over 80 per cent of the Iron I sites in southern Samaria continued to be occupied in Iron II.
 - 31 The growth of towns also includes a series of around 50 sites generally referred to as 'forts' or 'fortresses'. These sites vary in shape – circular, oval, rectangular, amorphous – and usually follow the contours of hills on which they are built; they vary in size from 25 to 70 m, often with isolated houses or at some distance. Mazar (1990: 390) follows Cohen in arguing that they are designed to control the Negev and its inhabitants and secure the trade routes crossing the Negev through Kadesh-Barnea towards the Red Sea and the commercial ties with Arabia.
 - 32 Finkelstein (1998: 8), for instance, has reiterated the view that 'the genuine change – the ground breaking transformation in the history of Palestine – came with the rise of the territorial national states in the first millennium BCE'. However, he argues also that fully blown statehood was not achieved until later: the ninth century BCE in Israel, and not until the eighth century BCE in Judah (Finkelstein 1995: 362; 1998: 32).
 - 33 Mazar (1990: 374) attributes the destruction of Megiddo (Str. VIA) and Tel Qasile (Str. X) to the time of David. Again this reflects the urge to try to reconstruct the history of the region with reference to the biblical traditions even though there is no mention in the traditions associated with David of such destructions. Herzog (1994: 143–4) notes that there was a shift from a wide spread of settlements in the Beersheba valley and more arid zones to the south in the eleventh century to fewer sites of the tenth century located in a restricted area along the valley. The total area in the tenth century was similar if not smaller than the agricultural sites of the eleventh century – with fortified, non-residential units and a smaller overall population. Herzog argues that the changes in settlement pattern are not due to the transition to the monarchy, but to climatic factors that led to the abandonment of most of the agricultural villages. He also argues that the spatial distribution of the Negev highland sites, the large variety of their shapes, and the fact that in many cases houses and animal pens are found outside the confines of the main settlement, support the view that this was a local settlement process rather than a state initiative (1994: 145).
 - 34 See Knoppers (1997) for a comprehensive review of opposing positions, and the essays in Handy (1997) and Fritz and Davies (1996).
 - 35 Similarly, Barkay (1992: 307) is forced to conclude that the 'glorified picture' emerging from the biblical traditions does not correspond to 'the reality reflected in the archaeological findings'.
 - 36 Barkay (1992: 306) concludes a recent survey of the Iron II period with the words that 'the precise dating of settlement strata and find assemblages of the tenth and ninth centuries is fraught with difficulties'.
 - 37 Knoppers (1997) provides a review and assessment of the various interpretations of the so-called Negev 'forts'.
 - 38 Knauf (1997: 81–2) concludes that the archaeological record for the tenth century has 'no room for a Solomonic empire, not even a state of Judah of [*sic*] Israel'. As Hopkins (1997: 309) notes, it is difficult to see how Jerusalem of the tenth century could have been the centre of a bureaucratic centralized state or empire when it was 'barely the center of its contiguous domain'.
 - 39 Dever (1995: 72) argues that material continuity from the twelfth to the sixth centuries BCE points to a 'national Israelite material culture' deriving from the monarchic period and is evidence of increasing centralization. However, Hopkins (1997: 304), by contrast, refers to 'a degree of homogenous material culture', and questions the degree of centralization involved.

- 40 Bienkowski (1998: 165) points out that there are huge regional variations in Iron II pottery in Transjordan with significant differences from north to south and within regions. The marked changes every 30 km or so, he argues, reflect the relative isolation of settlements, which, despite being regarded as parts of unified kingdoms, may have had little contact with one another and in which so-called 'centralized control' may have been superficial. See also Knauf (1992) and Miller (1992) for influential challenges to traditional arguments about state formations in Iron Age Transjordan.
- 41 Rosen (1994: 345) notes that there is no evidence of utensils or structures for the production of oil or wine in the subsistence economy of Iron I. He believes that the beginning of large-scale horticulture marks the transition from pre-monarchic to monarchic Israel. However, what it signifies is that the shift to large-scale horticulture took place as the revival continued in the countryside. Wine and oil production demanded long-term stability and settlement given the time it takes for vines and olive trees to reach maturity. The initial shift was towards the areas that offered the quickest return in subsistence. As the revival continued, horticulture once again became a viable option and advanced significantly in the Iron II period.
- 42 Thompson (1999: 184–5) points out that traditional histories fail to deal with the continued existence of Samaria and the northern hill country in the history of Palestine, because of their reliance on the biblical narratives in which the northern kingdom and its major towns disappear from the account on theological grounds.
- 43 See Hoglund (1991: 57) for some of the problems involved in the ceramic chronology for the Persian period.
- 44 This has been largely unwitting since many archaeologists have pursued the goal of correlating archaeological results with the biblical traditions in the search for ancient Israel without asking these wider questions. Only recently, as it has become apparent that the archaeological data cannot be related easily to the biblical traditions or the events portrayed within them, have these questions been pursued in earnest.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE AGE OF THE EXILE



Joseph Blenkinsopp

DEPORTATIONS AND DEMOGRAPHY

The period from the first deportation by Nebuchadrezzar (597 BC) to the restoration of an imperially backed local cult in Jerusalem in the sixth year of the Achaemenid Darius (515) is among the most important, and at the same time one of the most misunderstood, in the entire history of Israel and emergent Judaism. It begins with the extinction by the Babylonian armies of Judaeans independence after an existence of some four centuries. The biblical texts refer to three successive deportations to Babylon in the early sixth century BC, but the Deuteronomistic historian (hereafter Dtr) provides figures only for the first of the three following on the surrender of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 597 BC. At this point of the history we have a conflation of two reports, with the same classes of military personnel, craftsmen and smiths mentioned in both, one of which gives the figure of 10,000, the other 8,000, though in neither case is it clear whether these figures refer to just one category or the totality of deportees (2 Kgs 24:14–17). After the sack of Jerusalem eleven years later we are told that all of the people left in the city, those who had deserted to the Babylonians earlier and the rest of the skilled workers (reading *ʾammān* with Jer. 52:15) were deported, leaving only some of the peasantry (*dallat bāʾāreš*) to till the land (2 Kgs 25:11–12 = Jer. 52:15–16; cf. 39:9–10). That the author, in defiance of historical verisimilitude, informs us at *both* junctures that only peasants were left (2 Kgs 24:14; 25:12) provides the first of several clues to the ideological slant of this account of the deportations.

A quite different version of what happened, without parallel in either the Hebrew text of Kings or the Old Greek version, is recorded in Jeremiah 52:28–30. Here the statistics are 3,023 for the first of three deportations in the seventh year of Nebuchadrezzar (597),¹ 832 for that of the eighteenth year (586²), and 745 for the twenty-third year (582), therefore 4,600 in all. Those deported on the first and third of these occasions were Judaeans, and the 832 deported after the sack of the city in the year 586 were Jerusalemites. That the author of this notice refers to the deportees with the collective term *nepeš* (living soul, human being) might suggest that these figures are inclusive rather than limited to adult males. In any case, it is agreed that they inspire greater confidence than the Dtr statistics. They are not rounded

out and they do not square with the ideology either of the history or of the editors of the book of Jeremiah according to which the deportations emptied the land of any significant population (Jer. 13:19b; 40:11).³

The key explanatory role played by *the idea of exile* in Dtr is not difficult to detect. Beginning with the valedictory address of Joshua after the conquest of Canaan (Josh. 23:13, 15–16), the historian punctuates the narrative with frequent predictions of banishment from the land as the inevitable consequence of non-observance of the (Deuteronomic) law, and more specifically for violation of its cultic demands. The same message is conveyed in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple which, with its clear allusion to diasporic Judaeans (1 Kgs 8:46–53), could not have been composed before the sixth century BC. The point begins to be made more insistently as we come to the Assyrian deportations subsequent to the conquest of the Galilee (15:29), Damascus (16:9), and of course the Kingdom of Israel itself (17:6). The entire people is to blame, and therefore the entire people is deported. The historian anticipates the fall of Judah by concluding the account of the fall of Samaria with a similar formula – 'Israel went into exile from its land' (2 Kgs 17:23; cf. 25:21; cf. Jer. 52:27), with the clear implication of a *total* deportation and depopulation. The ideological rationale for this reading of the history of the kingdoms is to be sought in those passages of Deuteronomy in which banishment or exile is the working out of a curse incurred for violation of the covenant relationship between the national deity and the people as a whole (Deut. 4:26–8; 28:36, 41, 63–8; 29:28). In this respect, as students of Deuteronomy have long been aware, the authors were following the lead of those Assyrian scribes who drafted treaties with vassal states. The prospect and threat of being uprooted from their own land is one of the curses serving to encourage vassals to observe the stipulations of these treaties; the *reality* of exile is of course well attested in Assyrian inscriptions and iconography.⁴ In view of the statements about exile in Dtr, the practice in Assyrian inscriptions of speaking in terms of totality – all the men, all great and small are exiled – is also worth noting. Tiglat-pileser III, for example, claims to have deported all the men (*puḫur nišešu*) of the house of Omri (Oded 1979). And where statistics are given we generally have reason to be sceptical. It would be imprudent, for example, to calculate the population of eighth or seventh century Judah *exclusively* on the basis of the 200,150 Judaeans whom Sennacherib claims to have deported in 701 BC.⁵

The documentary evidence for the existence of ethnic minorities in southern Mesopotamia during the Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid periods includes a considerable number of Judaeo-Babylonians filling various occupational niches. As interesting and important as they are, these data (to be discussed shortly) do not help us to decide on the actual number of deportees. We cannot even be sure that individuals bearing Judaeans names belonged to the families and descendants of Judaeans deported by the Babylonians. Nor can we use for this purpose the various lists in Ezra–Nehemiah, especially the master census of Ezra 2:1–69 (= Neh. 7:6–68). This list purports to contain the names, affiliations or destinations of about 50,000 immigrants from Babylonia at the beginning of the Achaemenid period, but it is tolerably clear that it originated much later and for a different purpose.⁶ We are therefore left without a definite statistical outcome with respect to Judaeans deportees in the first two decades of the sixth century, but it seems that the weight of evidence

favours the lower total of Jeremiah 52:28–30 rather than the Dtr statistics. If the Jeremian figure counts only adult males, heads of families averaging four or five individuals each, the figure would still not exceed 20,000, somewhat lower than the 27,290 whom Sargon II claims to have deported after the fall of Samaria (ANET 284–5). This is an unsatisfactory result, but it seems to be the best we can do with the available data.⁷

Estimating the number of deportees is not particularly helpful, however, unless calculated as a percentage of the total population of Judah. Biblical scholars are only beginning to pay attention to the methodological issues involved in calculating the population of ancient settlements. To be successful, such calculations require an array of different sorts of data including the carrying capacity of the environment in question, human skeletal remains, floor space, the number of habitations in the settlement, and the average size of families.⁸ Needless to say these data are not always available; in fact they are generally not available, and the situation for ancient Palestinian sites is not improved by the frequent failure of archaeologists working in that region to publish scientific reports on their excavations and surveys, resulting in a severe shortage of usable settlement plans.

But even where data are available, it will not always be easy to come up with reliable results. Estimating the availability of resources, especially water and cereals, allows us to determine only the *maximum* amount, not the actual amount, consumed at the site. Human remains will, under ideal conditions, give us information on health and life expectancy, but it will not always be possible to determine that a particular collection (typically a cemetery) is chronologically homogeneous and representative of the population during the period in question. For example, infant bones are often underrepresented or mistaken for animal remains. Moreover, religious opposition to excavating human remains has gravely inhibited the work of the very few physical anthropologists associated with excavations in the State of Israel. The most promising approach is to work from living space and family size in those cases where an adequate floor plan of the site is available. But even here there are problems, for we cannot always be sure that non-residential space (e.g. administrative buildings, storage areas) has been factored out and non-permanent residence factored in. Assessment of family size is also problematic (estimates in the literature are anywhere from 3.5 to 8 individuals) and the minimum individual *roofed* floor space requirement (anywhere between 5.3 sq. m and 10 sq. m per individual) must also be taken into account.

The prospects for determining even approximately the population of Judah during the Neo-Babylonian period are not, therefore, very promising, even if we were quite clear about the extent of the province at that time. Though the tendency is to assume a drastic drop in population after disasters such as were visited on the region between 597 and 582 BC we should not underestimate the resilience of a population afflicted in this way and its ability to restore some semblance of normality in a remarkably short time. During and in the aftermath of military conquest population levels can fluctuate significantly. As the Babylonian army approached, many would have taken refuge in one or other of the inaccessible places of refuge with which southern Palestine and the Jordan Valley are liberally provided, to emerge thence once the worst was over. This is precisely what happened much later during Macedonian and

Roman campaigns in Syria–Palestine. We are in fact told that military units that had taken refuge ‘in the open country’ (*baššadeb*) re-emerged after the appointment of Gedaliah (Jer. 40:7; cf. 2 Kgs 25:23), and when things had settled down somewhat many others came back from the Transjordanian kingdoms and perhaps from as far away as Egypt (Jer. 40:11–12). It is also quite likely that a significant part of the population at that time became semi-nomadic or lived for a time in impermanent and improvised dwellings that would have left no signature on the archaeological record.

One noteworthy statistic provided by Dtr occurs in the account of the tribute imposed on Menahem by the Assyrians in the final decades of the Kingdom of Samaria (2 Kgs 15:19–20). Assuming that Menahem did not draw to a significant extent on other sources of revenue to buy off Tiglat-pileser, the 60,000 men of substance or property holders from whom the enormous indemnity was recovered would imply a total population of around 200,000. This total would be more or less compatible with the 27,290 deported by Sargon II from Samaria after the city fell (*ANET* 284–5). It is also within the range of the 200,150 whom Sennacherib claimed to have driven out (not necessarily deported) from forty-six provincial fortified cities, forts and villages in Judah (*ANET* 288). To many this statistic of the Taylor Prism will look like a typical exaggeration, but we cannot exclude the possibility that it represents a more or less accurate estimate, but perhaps an estimate of the total population of the Kingdom of Judah at that time (701 BC). At any rate, settlement patterns towards the end of Iron II in most parts of Judah, inclusive of the northern regions incorporated into the Kingdom of Judah by Josiah, suggest a fairly high population density level. Allowing for textual corruption and duplication, the settlements in Judah, Simeon and Benjamin listed in the book of Joshua (15:1–63; 18:11–28; 19:1–9), most if not all of which would have been in existence in the Neo-Babylonian period,⁹ amount to more than 150, only very few of which have been identified archaeologically. Moreover, several sites which have been excavated are fairly major, in the range of 2 to 3 ha, with an estimated minimum population of 500 to 1,000,¹⁰ and Jerusalem and Lachish at least were much larger and more populous. Further indications are provided by the survey of the Judean hill region carried out by A. Ofer over an area of about 900 sq. km south of Jerusalem. Ofer lists 235 inhabited sites of 1,000 sq. km or more, and estimates their total population at about 23,000 in Iron IIC (eighth century).¹¹ As Ofer points out, the Judean hill region has the lowest population density of the Central Massif. It would therefore presumably have been much less densely populated than the Shephelah (Lowlands) and the coastal region, and in fact most of the major sites in the province lie outside the region surveyed. An earlier survey reported by M. Kochavi shows a 25 per cent increase of settlements, mostly small unwallled villages, in Judah exclusive of the Judean wilderness and Benjamin territory between Iron II and the Persian period.¹² While we obviously cannot draw from these surveys any *precise* conclusions for the province as a whole prior to the deportations, they are consistent with indications noted earlier, which (allowing for a reasonable margin of error) suggest a total population in the last decades of Judean independence of about 200,000.

We therefore arrive, tentatively, at the conclusion that the deportations reduced the total population of the province by 10 per cent at the most. Even if we add a

considerable death toll as a result of Babylonian and Edomite incursions there is no reason to conclude, from the point of view of demography at any rate, that civic, cultural and religious life came to a standstill in the province in the half-century from the sack of Jerusalem to the fall of Babylon.¹³

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF JUDAH IN THE EXILIC AGE

Can this conclusion claim support from the archaeological data available for Judah during the same half-century? The questions are easy to formulate but not so easy to answer: Was the territory of Judah completely devastated in the course of the Babylonian conquest? Does the evidence support the thesis of a major depopulation, and thus make it less likely that the infrastructure essential for cultural, intellectual and cultic activity could have survived? Is the evidence of destruction evenly distributed or is it concentrated in certain regions? And where there does seem to be clear physical evidence for destruction, can we be sure that the Babylonians were the perpetrators? The task of providing answers to these questions is complicated by the dubious practice of using the Babylonian conquest of 589–586 as the terminus for Iron II, often with nothing between this point and the Persian period. This conventional method of periodizing archaeologically has the disadvantage of focusing exclusively on one quantitatively minor part of the Syro-Palestinian region. It also has the effect not only of insinuating a cultural hiatus in that area, which may or may not have been the case, or may have been the case to a greater or lesser extent, but of leaving most of the Neo-Babylonian period in a kind of limbo. Needless to say, it is not always possible to give as precise a date for material evidence for destruction (typically, a layer of ash) as 586 BC.¹⁴ We should therefore not be surprised that many of the claims advanced for destruction by the Babylonians have been called into question or rejected outright; in which respect we are witnessing a shrinking of the database reminiscent of the old debates about Israelite cities devastated in the wake of Joshua's army. We can hardly avoid a feeling of *déjà vu* (or *déjà lu*) on rereading such confident statements as the following apropos of the Babylonian conquest: 'all, or virtually all, of the fortified towns in Judah had been razed to the ground' or 'there is not a single known case where a town of Judah proper was continuously occupied through the exilic period'.¹⁵

The need for caution in making such claims on archaeological grounds can be illustrated without much difficulty. The most recent excavation of Beth-shemesh came up with neither architectural remains nor pottery datable to the seventh century BC. The re-excavators therefore quite reasonably called into question the final destruction of the site (stratum IIC) in 586 proposed by Elihu Grant and George Ernest Wright and since then widely accepted.¹⁶ Another instance of misdating in which it seems that the preference should be for 701 BC rather than 586 BC is Tell Beit Mirsim. The site was excavated in 1926–32 by W. F. Albright who identified it with biblical Debir (Kiriath-Sepher) and dated its destruction (stratum A2) to 586 BC largely on the basis of a seal impression that appears to mention the exiled king Jehoiachin (*l'lyqm n'r ywkn*). Though his conclusions were, once again, widely accepted, and this site is on most lists of cities destroyed by the Babylonians, more

recent stratigraphic and epigraphic studies have come up with poor attestation for settlement in the seventh and early sixth centuries and have called into question both Albright's identification of the site and his date for its destruction.¹⁷

An equally controversial site excavated by Albright in the 1920s and 1930s (and re-excavated by P. W. Lapp in 1964) is Tell el-Fül about 5 km north of the Damascus Gate. Both excavators identified the site with Gibeah, city of Saul, and Lapp dated its destruction in Period III to Nebuchadrezzar's campaign.

Here, too, both conclusions have been questioned, and in fact the stratigraphy remains so unclear even after several revisions by the excavators that no solid conclusions can be drawn from it.¹⁸ Albright was also involved in an advisory capacity in the excavation of Khirbet et-Tubeiqah, generally identified with Beth-Zur about 30 km south of Jerusalem, which was carried out in 1931 and 1957 under the direction of O. R. Sellers. The architectural and ceramic data from Iron II were in general very scarce, and evidence alleged in 1931 for a violent destruction by the Babylonians was not confirmed when the excavator returned to the site twenty-six years later.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Beth-Zur still features occasionally in lists of Judaeian sites destroyed during the Babylonian punitive campaign ending with the sack of Jerusalem in 586 BC.²⁰

These case histories illustrate the need for caution in correlating archaeological data with biblical dates. The situation is also rendered more complex by well-documented Edomite encroachment on southern Judah both before and after the Neo-Babylonian conquest. The principal excavator of Beersheba, Y. Aharoni, dated the latest destruction phase at the site (stratum II) to Sennacherib's campaign in 701. Some have since rejected this conclusion in favour of a later date, with the result that the ceramic evidence has so far proved insufficient to decide the issue one way or the other.²¹ Even greater uncertainty surrounds the interpretation of the data at Arad in the eastern Negev. Traces of burning on the floors of the citadel in stratum VI (Iron IIC, early sixth century), if dated correctly, would more likely have resulted from an Edomite than a Babylonian attack, a conclusion reinforced by the ostraca found in situ, which testify to hostile Edomite presence in the region. But there are so many unsolved and probably insoluble problems with the stratigraphy of this site that no reliable conclusions for its history in the Neo-Babylonian period are at present possible.²² Biblical tradition connects Hormah with Arad (Num. 21:1-3), and it therefore made sense to associate this biblical toponym with that area of the eastern Negev. Among excavated sites the major candidates seem to be Kh. Ghara – Tel Ira and Tell el-Milh – Tel Malḥata. Whatever their biblical connections may or may not be, both sites show signs of destruction by fire in late seventh to early sixth century BC and Edomite pottery has turned up at both. The probable conclusion, therefore, is that the destruction or damage at both sites occurred in the course of Edomite infiltration into southern Judah, for which there is no lack of evidence, both biblical and archaeological.²³ Since the time of Edward Robinson, Judean Aroer has been identified with ʿArarah about 20 km south-east of Beersheba, which in its turn has been identified with the Adadah of Joshua 15:22 (LXX^B Arouel). The identification is possible but by no means assured, especially since Aroer features in the biblical account of David's career (1 Sam. 30:28), and yet evidence of settlement on the excavated site prior to the seventh century BC is lacking. The principal

excavator, A. Biran, states that Aroer ceased to exist with the Babylonian conquest but offers no evidence for destruction. The presence of significant Edomite pottery and an Edomite seal suggest, however, that it too was occupied at least temporarily by Edomites no later than the Neo-Babylonian period.²⁴ Finally, Tell Abu Hureirah (Tel Haror), about 20 km west of Beersheba, by some identified with biblical Gerar, seems to have been destroyed about the middle of the seventh century, possibly in an Assyrian or Egyptian attack, but at any rate not by the Babylonians.²⁵

The growing body of evidence for Edomite expansion into the eastern Negev and Edomite occupation of Israelite strong points in that region (Ḥorvat ʿUza, Ḥorvat Radum, Ḥorvat ʿAnim, Ḥorvat Tov) makes it unlikely that the Babylonians penetrated so far south; and the survival of the chain of forts or lookout points in the southern approaches to Jerusalem in the Hebron hill country points to the same conclusion.²⁶ One of these Iron II sites without a biblical identification is the fortress excavated at Khirbet Abu Tuwein in the early 1970s. On the basis of debris and ash in one of the rooms it was at first claimed that the fortress had been burnt at the end of Iron II, but a few years later the evidence was reinterpreted to indicate desertion by its inhabitants rather than destruction.²⁷

In central Judah, consisting of the Shephelah, the hill country and the Arabah, destruction would have been more extensive, but also selective. It was hardly in Babylonian imperial interests, and not at all in accord with what we know of Babylonian policy, to wreak indiscriminate destruction on subject countries, and in fact Jeremiah 34:7 speaks of the Babylonians concentrating their attack on the fortified cities. Jerusalem was, of course, the primary target of the punitive campaign, and we have reason to believe that it suffered more severely than provincial towns. The evidence is well known: thick layers of ash, burnt houses and arrowheads uncovered in recent decades in the course of excavations in different parts of Jerusalem bear witness to the fate of the city at the hands of the Babylonians, and there are indications that nearby Khirbet Saliḥ – Ramat Raḥel may have suffered the same fate.²⁸ No site apart from Jerusalem has clearer attestation of destruction than Tell ed-Duweir – Lachish, doubtless because of its situation on the route from the coast to Jerusalem taken by invading armies (Mic. 1:10–16). Partially restored after the Assyrian assault of 701 BC, the city was again destroyed and remained buried under destruction debris until well into the Persian period (see Jer. 34:7 and the ostraca found in one of the gate annexes²⁹). The fate of Azekah (Tell Zakariya) is commonly linked with that of Lachish on account of its mention in Jeremiah 34:7 and Lachish ostrakon 4. This may be correct, though Jeremiah 34:7 simply says that Azekah had not fallen at the time of writing, and the failure of Hoshaiiah and his people to see the signals of Azekah is susceptible of more than one explanation. It should also be noted that the report of the excavation of Tell Zakariya, now a century old, said nothing about a destruction level datable to that time.³⁰

Destruction levels have been identified at a few other sites in the heartland of Judah. The gate and some domestic houses at Tell Jezer – Gezer stratum V (late eighth to seventh century BC) show signs of burning, perhaps in 586 according to the excavator W. G. Dever, though a somewhat earlier date can hardly be excluded.³¹ A similar claim has been made for stratum VIIa at Tell el-Ḥesi, by some identified with biblical Eglon, but given its situation we can hardly exclude destruction by

Edomites.³² At the extreme eastern edge of the province Engedi (Tell el-Jurn – Tel Goren) provides a striking example of both the possibilities and problems involved in using archaeological data for historical reconstruction. The principal excavator, B. Mazar, reported that stratum V (c.630–582) was completely destroyed by fire. I noted earlier that the terminal date for stratum V, that is, 582 BC, was chosen not on archaeological grounds, at least not on any made available in the reports, but on the basis of Jeremiah 52:30 listing a third deportation in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadrezzar. Another problem is the gap between c.582 and c.500, the latter designated as the beginning of stratum IV corresponding roughly to the Persian period, a time when Engedi went through a period of expansion and prosperity with flourishing industrial installations, at least down to the end of the fifth century. We therefore have practically no information on the settlement during the Neo-Babylonian period, no assurance that it was destroyed in the year indicated, and no proof that the Babylonians rather than Edomites were the destroyers.³³

For our understanding about what was going on in Judah during the obscure period from Nebuchadrezzar to Cyrus the most interesting aspect of this survey is to be sought north of Jerusalem, in the erstwhile territory of Benjamin. To date, no evidence of destruction in late Iron II strata has come to light in any of the sites excavated. None was discovered at el-Jîb (Gibeon), a major centre for wine production, and it now seems that the late Iron Age cemetery continued in use after the fall of Jerusalem, presumably for the inhabitants of the town.³⁴ Badè's excavation of Tell en-Naşbeh (identified with biblical Mizpah) in the 1920s and 1930s uncovered evidence consistent with a change from border fortress to provincial capital of the province following the sack of Jerusalem.³⁵ J. L. Kelso's excavation of Beitin (Bethel), in close proximity to Mizpah, uncovered evidence for a destruction in the late Neo-Babylonian or early Persian period but not during the campaign that led to the destruction of Jerusalem.³⁶ I recall, finally, the premature and almost certainly mistaken identification of a destruction layer in Period III of Tell el-Ful, by some identified with Gibeah of Benjamin.

The situation in Benjaminite territory suggested by the archaeological data is confirmed by the census list at Ezra 2:1–67 (= Neh. 7:6–68), which includes the names of about twenty towns or villages in which the first immigrants settled on their return from Babylon (Ezra 2:20–35 = Neh. 7:25–38). Allowing for the occasional error in transmission and uncertainty of location, twelve or thirteen of these towns are in Benjamin, and only two (Bethlehem and Netophah) are located south of Jerusalem. This is exactly what we would expect if the band of territory north of Jerusalem, corresponding to land originally assigned to Benjamin, was spared the attentions of the Babylonian army. The absence of Mizpah from the census list is also understandable in view of its status as provincial administrative centre under Babylonian rule, about which more will be said later.

It seems impossible to explain this situation without assuming either that the territory of Benjamin north of Jerusalem surrendered to the Babylonians at an early stage of the campaign, or that these 'Benjaminites' belonged to the anti-war or appeasement party after the Neo-Babylonian takeover of the entire region. Interesting in this respect is the treatment of Jeremiah when he attempted to leave the city by the Benjamin Gate during the siege in order to take possession of a plot of land in

Benjaminite territory (Jer. 32:1–15; 37:11–15): in spite of his protests he was arrested as a *deserter* (37:13) and barely escaped with his life. The revival at that time of a distinctive tribal identity of Benjaminites *vis-à-vis* Judaeans is a puzzling phenomenon. Perhaps the collapse of the state apparatus in the final decades of Judah's quasi-independence led to a kind of retribalization reflected in an addiction to genealogies (1 Chr. 7:6–12; 8:1–40 for Benjamin), classification by ancestral houses (the distinctive *bēt 'ābôt*, ancestral 'house', of Persian period texts) and the use of Judah and Benjamin as personal names (e.g. Neh. 12:34). The description of the Persian province of Judah *from within* as 'Judah and Benjamin' (Ezra 1:5; 4:1; 10:9; Neh. 11:4 and often in Chronicles) is also significant in this respect. We may sum up by saying that destruction during the Babylonian conquest was selective, limited to the region south of Jerusalem, and in that region to a few specific centres of resistance. It is on this basis that any reconstruction of the political, cultural and religious situation of Judah as a province of the Neo-Babylonian empire (597–539 BC) must be grounded.

POLITICS AND RELIGION IN NEO-BABYLONIAN JUDAH

According to the biblical record of events, following the Babylonian conquest Mizpah (Tell en-Nasbeh), situated about 12 km north of Jerusalem, replaced Jerusalem as the administrative centre of the province and was chosen as the residence of the Babylonian-appointed governor (2 Kgs 25:22–6; Jer. 40:6–41:18). The appointee was Gedaliah, member of a distinguished Judaeans family and grandson of Shaphan the public official who played a prominent role in public affairs during the reign of Josiah. If the seal bearing the name Gedaliah discovered at Lachish is genuine and belonged to him, he may also have served as major-domo of the palace during Zedekiah's reign.³⁷ The relevant biblical texts (2 Kgs 25:22–3; Jer. 40:5, 7, 11; 41:2, 18) are not forthcoming about Gedaliah's official status, but leave room to suspect that he was installed at Mizpah as a puppet king. This was fairly standard procedure followed by Babylonians and, before them, Assyrians (e.g. Sennacherib set up Bel-ibni as puppet king in Babylon and Nebuchadrezzar did the same in Judah with Mattaniah, 2 Kgs 24:17). The rather odd absence of a title – supplied gratuitously in several modern versions – may in fact be due to embarrassment or vexation at the appointment of a non-Davidic king. Pointing in the same direction is the description of Gedaliah's eventual assassin Ishmael as a chief officer of the king (*rab hammelek*, Jer. 41:1), certainly not the Babylonian king. Ishmael *was* a Davidide (Jer. 41:1), which of course helps to explain why he carried out his terrorist act, probably in 582 BC, with the connivance of the Ammonite king Baalis who opposed the policy of accommodation pursued by Gedaliah (Jer. 40:9–10, 14; 2 Kings 25:24). (Hostility between Ammon and Judah will continue into the Achaemenid period in the persons of Tobiah and Nehemiah.) Of possible relevance is also the seal discovered at Tell en-Nasbeh, during Badè's excavation, belonging to one Jaazaniah, a royal official (*ly'znybw 'bd hmlk*), the same name as the one borne by a member of Gedaliah's court at Mizpah (2 Kgs 25:23; cf. Jezaniah, Jer. 40:8).³⁸ Finally, the king whose daughters were taken captive by Ishmael at Mizpah (Jer. 41:10) may be Gedaliah,

though the author could also have been thinking of the exiled and by now possibly defunct Zedekiah.³⁹

Mizpah retained its importance after the province of Judah (Yehud) passed under Iranian control about half a century later, at which time it served as the official residence of the satrap on visits to the province (Neh. 3:7). The results of excavation at Tell en-Naṣbeh are consistent with the important political role assigned to this city during the Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid periods. Badè uncovered one of the stronger defensive perimeters in the country, the buildings of stratum 2 (Neo-Babylonian period) were larger, better constructed, and on a different grid from those in the earlier Iron II level, and there appear to be traces of a large public building at the northern end of the site.⁴⁰ One reason for the choice of Mizpah as the capital of the Babylonian province was its situation in Benjaminite territory, the population of which, as noted earlier, seems to have been prepared to accept Babylonian rule, at least as a *faute de mieux* and a prudent alternative to open rebellion. The political and therefore also the religious centre of gravity shifted during this period from the centre and south of the province to the north. It is difficult for us in retrospect to imagine that Jerusalem could ever have been eclipsed, yet it must have appeared by no means inevitable at that time that 'this rebellious city hurtful to kings and provinces' (Ezra 4:15) would be restored to its former position. It was certainly not inevitable for Nebuchadrezzar and his successors. That it was restored was due to a combination of circumstances, principally the initiative of enthusiastic Judaeo-Babylonians supported by imperial policy-makers in distant Susa with a special interest in this small western province, especially after the conquest of Egypt by Cambyses (525 BC). That its restoration was bitterly resisted is apparent from the sustained opposition to it, both internal and external, attested in Ezra–Nehemiah and prophetic texts from the early Persian period.

A further consideration relevant to the political status of the province is Josiah's annexation of territory belonging to provinces of the Assyrian empire a few miles north of Jerusalem. The biblical historian records Josiah's activity in Bethel and the cities of Samaria (2 Kgs 23:15–20), and his fatal encounter with Pharaoh Neco took place at Megiddo (23:29). To what extent he succeeded in annexing territory belonging to the Assyrian provinces we do not know.⁴¹ In the relative absence of information on imperial administration in Syria–Palestine it has generally been assumed that the Babylonian overlords left existing arrangements in place.⁴² If this was the case, the strategically advantageous position of Mizpah on the main south–north route suggests that it may have served as administrative centre for territory well beyond the northern boundary of the former Kingdom of Judah.

As the administrative centre of the Babylonian province of Judah and the residence at least for a time of a royal court, Mizpah would presumably have had a sanctuary of however modest dimensions attached to it. Local cults and their personnel were a normal part of the apparatus of imperial control in the Near East. After the conquest of Samaria, for example, the Assyrians insisted on setting up a cultic installation at Bethel to teach the immigrant population 'the law of the god of the land' (2 Kgs 17:24–8). The Babylonian commander Nebuzaradan had seen to it that the Jerusalem temple and its personnel were no longer available to provide religious legitimation for further resistance, and even if the altar had survived it

would have been corpse-contaminated (e.g. Lam. 2:20) and therefore ritually inaccessible. Lamentations may have been composed for use on the site of the ruined temple, but if so its recital would no more have amounted to a regular liturgy than prayers offered at the *kotel* (the Western Wall) by pious Jews today. Jeremiah 41:4–10 reports that a delegation of eighty individuals from the north was on its way to ‘the temple of Yahweh’ with offerings when they were slaughtered by Ishmael the day after the bloody coup in Mizpah (Jer. 41:4–10). Most commentators have assumed that they were intercepted and massacred while on their way to Jerusalem, but since the Jerusalem temple was in ruins and its altar desecrated it seems more likely that their destination was the designated provincial sanctuary at or near Mizpah. The likelihood that this was the case is increased by allusions to Mizpah as an important political and religious centre in narratives set in the early period of Israelite history but originating no earlier than the Neo-Babylonian period (Judg. 20–1; 1 Sam. 7:5–6, 9–10; 10:17). In this connection the proximity of the ancient and prestigious sanctuary of Bethel (Beitin) to Mizpah should also be borne in mind.⁴³

Any attempt to put together the textual *disiecta membra* at our disposal into a convincing reconstruction of the political and religious situation in Neo-Babylonian Judah will necessarily be provisional. Two conclusions, however, seem to be reasonably assured. First, the infrastructure of the province was not destroyed, and thus a certain level of cultural activity including writing remained possible. Second, the polarity in the province between south and north, between rebellious Jerusalem gutted by the Babylonians and the administrative complex at Mizpah, between the abandoned cult centre in Jerusalem and its replacement in or near Mizpah, was a decisive feature of the political and religious landscape. This situation goes far to explain the conflicts and accommodations of the early Achaemenid period, especially Samarian hostility to the installation of a Judaeo-Babylonian elite controlling a rebuilt Jerusalem temple. It also helps to account for the conflicts and accommodations among priest families and factions that resulted eventually in Aaronites and Zadokites sharing hegemony. The almost complete absence of reference to priests claiming descent from Aaron in biblical texts with the exception of the Priestly source (P) in the Hexateuch and Chronicles,⁴⁴ and the association in the narrative tradition of Aaron with Bethel,⁴⁵ suggest the possibility that the ‘sons of Aaron’ (*benē ’aharon*) profited by the Babylonian conquest and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple to obtain a foothold in the province of Judah. The patronymic of the Judaeo-Babylonian priest who claimed and apparently obtained control of the rebuilt Jerusalem temple, Jeshua ben-Jehozadak (Ezra 3:2 etc.), suggests further that he was the leader of the Zadokite party (the *benē-šāddôq*) claiming descent real or fictitious from David’s chief priest. However it came about, the accommodation reached between Aaronite and Zadokite priests in the late biblical period is reflected in the Aaronite genealogy of the Jerusalem priesthood in which Zadok occupies the midpoint between Levi and Jehozadak (1 Chr. 5:27–41).

Any attempt to assess the level and quality of religious life in Neo-Babylonian Judah is beset by two problems. The first and most obvious is the lack of data and the difficulty, or in some cases practical impossibility, of knowing the place of origin or date of the relevant biblical material. It is therefore advisable to consider most

of these texts independently of the respective Judaeen and diasporic situations. The other problem is that from the very beginning the historiographical tradition has decisively and unremittently favoured the Judaeo-Babylonian element, which established itself in Judah (Yehud) as the dominant socio-economic elite and secured control of the rebuilt Jerusalem temple in the early Achaemenid period. All the significant religious initiatives are presented as originating in Babylonian Jewry and the native population, known as 'the peoples of the land' (*ammē bā^a arāšôt*, Ezra 3:3, etc.), are by contrast described as religiously and ritually polluted and compromised by intermarriage with outsiders. Influenced by this tradition, modern scholarship has until recently tended to locate practically all the more or less contemporaneous biblical texts – with the exception of Lamentations – in the Babylonian diaspora; and this despite the fact that as little as we know about what was happening in Judah, we know even less about the situation in Babylon.

LIFE IN THE DIASPORA

During the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods the Jewish diaspora spread around the Mediterranean rim and from the Caspian Sea in the north to Nubia in the south. The two major centres were the alluvial plain of southern Mesopotamia and Egypt from the Nile delta to the southern border (see, e.g., Jer. 44:1; Isa. 11:11; 19:18–25). We have practically no information on Jewish settlements in Lower Egypt. Judaeen mercenaries had fought in Egyptian armies long before 586 BC and it is safe to assume that some of them settled in Egypt. Jeremiah 44:1 mentions Jewish settlements at Pelusium, Daphne and Memphis, and about that time we also hear of a Greek diasporic trading settlement at Naucratis in the same region. The Jewish military colony on the island of Elephantine at the first cataract of the Nile may have been established by this time – it certainly antedates the Persian conquest of Egypt in 525 BC – but the extant Aramaic documents all date from the fifth century BC.⁴⁶

Successive waves of deportees following on the first conquest of Jerusalem in 597 were settled in the alluvial plain of southern Mesopotamia in the neighbourhood of the city of Nippur. Ezekiel reports a vision near the River Chebar (Ezek. 1:1, etc.), the *nār kabari* or 'grand canal' mentioned in contracts from the reign of Artaxerxes I (464–424), identified with the *shatt en-nîl* which makes a loop through Nippur on its way back to the Euphrates. The actual location of the experience, Tel Aviv, is unidentified, as are the names of settlements in the Judaeo-Babylonian census in Ezra 2:59 (= Neh. 7:61) – Tel Melah, Tel-Harsha, Cherub, Addan, Immer. The prominence of place names with 'tel' (Akkadian *tillu*), meaning the site of an abandoned ancient settlement, suggests a deliberate policy of settling ethnic minorities in areas earmarked for redevelopment, a kind of internal colonization, which agrees with what we know of the economic situation at that time and policies pursued by the Neo-Babylonian court.⁴⁷ It is also significant that Judaeen and other deported groups were not enslaved. Slavery was not a major factor in the Neo-Babylonian economy except for temples, since slavery was not as cost effective a means of food production for an expanding population as leasing land to tenant farmers.⁴⁸ Moreover, ethnic minorities – Egyptians, Greeks, Phoenicians, Elamites and many others

besides Judaeans – were permitted, probably even encouraged, to maintain their own distinct organization under Babylonian supervision, for obvious administrative and fiscal reasons. The fate of Judaeans settlers was therefore very different from that of those deported by the Assyrians from the Kingdom of Samaria in the eighth century who had long since disappeared from the historical record.

Thousands of cuneiform tablets excavated at sites in southern Mesopotamia – principally Ur, Sippar, Uruk (the temple of the goddess Eanna), Nippur and Babylon – provide abundant information on social and economic conditions during the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods. Among these the most interesting from the point of view of Judaeans presence in the region are the archives of the commercial house of Murashu (*bit murašū*) discovered more than a century ago at Nippur and dating from the mid to late fifth century BC. About a third of the names occurring in these texts are non-Babylonian and among these latter a significant percentage are Israelite–Judaeans names, many of them theophoric formed with Yahweh (e.g. Banayaw, Zabadyaw, Tobyaw, Yahunatan) or otherwise familiar from biblical texts (e.g. Hanani, Shabbatai).⁴⁹ While conclusions based on onomastics call for caution – Judaeans could take Babylonian names (e.g. Zerubbabel, Mordecai) and presumably Babylonians could also take Yahwistic names – these data testify to a significant Judaeans presence in the area occupying a variety of roles including tenant farmers on crown lands, fishermen, and estate managers.

Some ethnic minorities in the Nippur region were organized in a self-governing corporation (*hatru*) for the collective exploitation of land held in fief. Though direct evidence is lacking, this may have been the case with some Judaeans settlers. A document from the region of Babylon in the early Achaemenid period records a transaction carried out in the presence of ‘the assembly (*pubru*) of the elders of the Egyptians’ and we hear of a Jew bringing action against the house of Murashu before the *pubru* of Nippur.⁵⁰ Biblical texts testify to the important organizational role played by elders (*zēqēnîm*) in the Babylonian diaspora (e.g. Jer. 29:1; Ezek. 8:1; 14:1; 20:1, 3; Ezra 5:5, 9 6:7–8), and there may be connections between a putative diasporic Judaeans *pubru* and organizational features of the *q̄bal haggôlâ* (assembly of the diaspora group), which, according to the biblical sources, formed the dominant elite in Achaemenid Judah (Ezra 10:8). Other distinctive features of the post-exilic Judaeans community may also have been imported or adopted from the Babylonian diaspora, including the social and economic role of the Jerusalem temple, land tenure, organization according to large (often fictive) kinship units (the *bēt ʾābôt*; cf. the Babylonian *bit abîm*),⁵¹ and the practice of convening plenary sessions of the *qābāl* (assembly) to decide important issues (e.g. Ezra 10:1–8; Neh. 8:1), rather like the Athenian *ekklesia*.

The religious life of Judaeans–Babylonian communities is known to us only from occasional allusions in biblical texts (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isa. 40–55; Ezra–Nehemiah for the Achaemenid period) helped out by inference and conjecture. It has been suggested that the elders of the diaspora sought Ezekiel’s approval for building a temple (Ezek. 20:1–3, 32) and that ‘the place Casiphia’ in Babylonia where Ezra recruited cult personnel (Ezra 8:17) was such a temple, comparable to the sanctuary at which the Elephantine Jews worshipped in Egypt.⁵² While this is quite uncertain, we cannot explain the preservation of traditions on which the survival of the

Jewish ethnos depended without postulating some kind of infrastructure, perhaps in the form of a rudimentary synagogue network. The important role of the elders has already been noted, priests and Levites were still being educated (Ezra 7:6; 8:15–20), prophets were active, some of them apparently too active (Jer. 29:21–3), and instruction in religious traditions and practice was presumably going on. The frequent mention of settlements near running water (Ezek. 1:3; Ezra 8:15; Ps. 137) suggests an emphasis on rituals of purification accompanied by penitential prayer (Isa. 63:7–64:12; Ezra 9:6–15) and fasting (Zech. 7:3–7; 8:18–19; Ezra 8:21, 23), practices that reflect major concerns of the *b'nē haggôlâ* in early Achaemenid Judah. The circumstances in which diasporic Jews lived would have led those anxious to preserve their separate identity to give special importance to rituals of avoidance, dietary laws, circumcision and the observance of sabbath, all of which are much in evidence beginning about that time. Contacts with Judah were maintained through correspondence (e.g. Jer. 29) and movement back and forth, leading after the fall of Babylon (539 BC) to substantial numbers resettling in the province of Judah (Yehud). The practice of praying towards Jerusalem also dates from that time and place (1 Kgs 8:30, 35; Dan. 6:10), testifying to close emotional and spiritual ties between the homeland and the diaspora.

REACTIONS TO POLITICAL DISASTER

The military conquests of the great empires in the Near East were sponsored by and carried out in the name of imperial deities, Ashur, Marduk and – for Xerxes in his unsuccessful campaign against the mainland Greeks – Ahura Mazda. In 701 the Assyrian Rabshakeh tried to persuade Hezekiah to capitulate by pointing out that the Judaeans national deity could not hope to succeed where the gods of Hamath, Arpad and other conquered territories had failed to resist the Assyrian onslaught (2 Kgs 18:33–5; 19:12). Somewhat inconsistently, he added for good measure a very familiar kind of argument, namely, that Hezekiah had provoked the anger of the national deity by abolishing the high places (2 Kgs 18:22). At that time there was no Qoheleth to suggest that some things just happen and there is nothing to be done about it. One felt obliged to seek a *theological* reason for disaster, and the line of reasoning would tend to be either that the national deity had proved too weak, forgetful or negligent to save his devotees, or that he was using the Babylonians to punish his people for neglecting his cult or for other delinquencies. In any case, as Amos put it (3:7), the local deity had to be involved in some way any time evil befell a city – Samaria or Jerusalem, for example (Amos 3:7).

These are, more or less, the terms in which surviving representatives of and adherents to the national cult as opposed to local familial cults would have reacted to the disaster. The problem they faced was exacerbated by the crisis of prophecy in the last decades of Judah's existence, since it could at least be assumed that the deity endorsed the prophet's utterances. Nationalistic prophets like Hananiah, Ahab and Zedekiah who predicted trouble for Nebuchadrezzar (Jer. 28:1–4; 29:21–2) would obviously have lost their prophetic credentials in addition to losing their lives. But prophets of doom like Jeremiah would not have emerged unscathed, either because they were thought to have contributed to bringing about disaster by predicting it,

or on account of their refusal to intercede for the people (Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11–12). The crisis of prophecy in the years leading up to the fall of Jerusalem contributed substantially to the collapse of the cultic reforms of Josiah and the revival of syncretism. The state cult of the goddess Asherah, abolished by Josiah (2 Kgs 23:4, 6–7), was reinstated after 597 (Ezek. 8:3), and there were those in the Egyptian diaspora and no doubt elsewhere, among whom women are singled out, who attributed the disaster of 586 not to the anger of Yahweh but to the attempt to suppress the traditional and long-standing cult of the goddess (Jer. 44:15–19).

Whatever its origins, the idea that the nation's relationship with Yahweh rested on the basis of a contract or covenant, the terms of which were available in writing, came to mature formulation in writings emanating from the Deuteronomistic school both before and after the fall of Jerusalem. For the historian (Dtr) the idea had the advantage of providing a ready explanation of disaster by way of demonstrating that the people as a whole, and the rulers in particular, had broken the terms of their contract and had therefore forfeited divine protection. In the post-disaster period adherents of this Deuteronomistic theology attempted to modify the contractual character of the relationship somewhat by speaking in terms of a certain internalization of the moral requirements of the covenant, of the law written on the heart (Deut. 30:11–14; Jer. 31:31–4). For others, however, the experience of disaster on a massive scale appears to have revealed the inadequacy of this way of thinking in a more basic way. It seems that the authors of the Priestly source in the Pentateuch (conventionally designated by the siglum P), writing in the post-disaster period, abandoned altogether the idea of a bilateral agreement as a basis for moral obligation. Hence the absence of an account of covenant-making in the P version of the Sinai event. For others unable to abandon traditional religious thinking entirely the experience of disaster provoked reflection on the depths of moral incapacity – expressed in prophetic sayings about the inability of the leopard to change its spots (Jer. 13:23) and the desperate sickness of the human heart (Jer. 17:9–10).

The deportations confronted the deportees with the immediate question of the possibility of worshipping their deity outside the deity's jurisdiction and in territory in which the writ of other gods ran. We recall that David cursed those who drove him off his own turf to serve other gods (1 Sam. 26:19), and that Naaman the Syrian took back to Damascus a load of Israelite soil in order to be able to worship the God of Israel there (2 Kgs 5:17). The question about singing hymns to Yahweh in a foreign land (Ps. 137:4) was therefore not merely rhetorical. One solution at the symbolic level is presented in Ezekiel's vision of the mobile throne (Ezek. 1:1–28; 10:1–17), the base text in Jewish *merkābā* mysticism, and the description of the migration of the divine 'glory' (*kābôd*) by stages from Jerusalem to Babylon where the vision could therefore take place (Ezek. 10:18–19; 11:23). Though subject to debate and controversy during the entire period of the Second Commonwealth (e.g. in Jonah who fled from the presence of Yahweh only to encounter him on the high seas and at Nineveh), the implications of breaking the link between deity and territory were far reaching. For Ezekiel and his 'school', however, the blueprint for a temple community in Judah (Ezek. 40–8), and the goal of repossessing land confiscated during the Babylonian conquest (Ezek. 11:14–17), reveal a limited and interim view of diasporic existence. Similar but more specifically political

aspirations were entertained by those who still considered the restoration of the native dynasty a goal to be pursued, either in the person of Jehoiachin, detained at the Babylonian court, or one of his descendants.⁵³

An anonymous seer preaching and writing during the last years of the reign of Nabonidus (Nabuna'id 556–539), probably in the Babylonian diaspora,⁵⁴ turned the crisis of prophecy referred to earlier on its head by arguing that it was precisely the fulfilment of the prophecies of doom, which he refers to as 'the former things' (Isa. 41:22; 42:9; 43:9, 18; 46:9; 48:3), that provides the assurance that the prospect of liberation and a new beginning now being prophesied would indeed come about. This prospect is intimately tied in with the predicted collapse of the Babylonian empire and triumph of Cyrus who is even designated Yahweh's messiah (Isa. 45:1). The seer's 'argument from prophecy' is reinforced by a vigorous polemic against the cult of Babylonian deities as supplying religious legitimation for the Babylonian state and its imperial pretensions (Isa. 40:18–20; 44:9–20; 46:1–7). His presentation of Yahweh as world ruler and creator could be read as a mirror-image of the qualities attributed to the imperial deity Marduk in the canonical creation myth (*enuma elish*) recited at the autumnal New Year *akitu* festival, the high point of the Babylonian liturgical year.⁵⁵ To the Babylonian claim cited by the prophet – 'I am, and there is no one besides me' (Isa. 47:10) – corresponds the claim advanced by the 'Yahweh alone' party on behalf of their God that we begin to hear consistently from about that time and that will be the most characteristic feature of the Judaism to emerge under, successively, Iranian and Macedonian rule.

NOTES

- 1 Some commentators emend *šēbaʿ* (seven) to *šēbaʿ ʾšrē* (seventeen), permitting the opinion that this larger number of deportees was culled from the provincial towns and villages that fell to the Babylonians while Jerusalem was still under siege, an opinion that can claim some support from the designation *yʿhūdīm* (Judeans) as opposed to the 832 Jerusalemites deported after the fall of Jerusalem. See Rudolph 1968: 322–5; Malamat 1956: 253–6. This is, I suppose, possible, though hardly obligatory. There is no support in the ancient versions for the alteration, and the seventh year fits the known date for the first surrender of the city to the Babylonians.
- 2 Whether the year in which city and temple were destroyed was 587 or 586 continues to be debated inconclusively. Arguments for the latter, adopted here, can be found in Hayes and Hooker 1988: 95–8.
- 3 E.g. Jer. 13:19b: *boglat yʿhūdâ kullâ boglat šʿlômîm* (or, with some versions, *gālût šʿlēmâ*), anticipating that the Babylonians would do a thorough job of deporting the population of Judah; Jer. 40:11: the Babylonians left only a remnant (*šʿʾrît*) in Judah. On exile as a ideological construct in biblical texts see Ackroyd 1968: 237–47; Carroll 1992: 79–93; Barstad 1996: *passim*.
- 4 Parpola and Watanabe 1988; Oded 1979. In describing the foreign land destined for the besieged inhabitants of Jerusalem in 701 BC, the Rabshakeh sounds like an enthusiastic travel agent (2 Kgs 18:32). The reality, I suppose, would have turned out to be rather different.
- 5 ANET 288. Oded 1979: 19–20 gives the total of forty-three Assyrian deportations accounting for 1,210,928 persons and, on the basis of their records, calculates that the Assyrians displaced some four and a half million people over a period of three centuries.
- 6 Blenkinsopp 1988: 79–93.
- 7 One of the most thorough discussions of the issue in the light of the Assyrian data, though naturally out of date in some respects, is that of Janssen 1956: 25–39. He comes out in favour

- of the numbers in Jeremiah. Josephus, *Ant.* 10:98–101, counts 3,000 of the ruling class and 10,832 young men and artisans from Jerusalem. Since the larger figure has been reached by combining the 10,000 of 2 Kgs 24:14 with the 832 of Jer. 52:29 it has no independent value.
- 8 I have consulted Naroll 1962: 587–9; Heicksen 1975: 31–9; Hassan 1978: 49–103; Shiloh 1980: 25–35; Stager 1985: 1–35; Zorn 1994: 31–48.
 - 9 There is broad agreement that these lists correspond to a situation no earlier than the seventh century BC. See Kallai-Kleinmann 1958: 134–60; Aharoni 1979: 347–51.
 - 10 For Tell en-Naṣbeh stratum III (Iron II) Zorn estimates the population of the town, based on an exceptionally good ground plan, at about 1,000; see Zorn 1994: 31–48; and cf. Albright's estimate of 3,000 for eighth-century BC Tell Beit Mirsim; Albright 1960 [1949]: 105 n. 118.
 - 11 Ofer 1993, 3: 815–16; 1994: 92–121.
 - 12 Kochavi 1972 (in Hebrew).
 - 13 In agreement with Weinberg 1972: 45–59 (total population 220,000 to 250,000, and 20,000 deportees), with which we can compare Kreissig 1973: 22–3 who postulates 15,600 deportees constituting one in eight of the population. While I still think Weinberg's figures err on the high side, I would now be more prepared to accept high figures than I was in Blenkinsopp 1991: 40–4.
 - 14 B. Mazar's claim that stratum V of En-Gedi was completely destroyed by fire in 582 is a case in point since the date was chosen not on strictly archaeological grounds but rather on account of Jer. 52: 28–30, which refers to a deportation in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadrezzar; see Mazar 1993, 1: 402. We should also bear in mind that there was more than one Babylonian campaign in the Syro-Palestinian region during the reign of Nebuchadrezzar, on which see Wiseman 1985: 21–41. Can we really be sure, on archaeological grounds, that a particular site was destroyed in 586 and not 597 BC, for example? One solution to the periodization problem would be to interpose an Intermediate Period 600–550 between Iron III (Assyrian period, 700–600) and the Persian period (550–330).
 - 15 Albright 1960 [1949]: 142.
 - 16 Bunimovitz and Lederman, *NEAEHL* 1: 249–53 with bibliography; Emerton 1967: 197–206.
 - 17 Greenberg 1993, 1: 177–80; Albright 1967: 207–20.
 - 18 Arnold 1990: 50–4; Nancy L. Lapp 1993 2: 445–8.
 - 19 Sellers 1968; Funk 1993, 1: 259–61.
 - 20 E.g. Oded 1977: 475.
 - 21 Herzog 1993, 1: 167–73; Manor 1992, 1: 641–5.
 - 22 Aharoni 1993a 1: 82–7; Manor and Herion 1992 1: 331–6. Substantial doubts have been registered about Aharoni's stratigraphy by several archaeologists, including Ussishkin 1988, 142–57 who argues that the ceramic data suggest compressing Aharoni's strata X, IX and VIII into the eighth century. He also proposes to redate the casemate wall of stratum VI (Iron IIC) to the Hellenistic period. On the Arad ostraca, especially ostrakon #24 referring to hostile Edomite activities in the region, see Aharoni 1981.
 - 23 Kochavi 1993, 3: 934–6; Beit-Arieḥ 1993, 2: 642–6; Bartlett 1982: 13–24.
 - 24 Biran 1993, 1: 89–92 summarizing numerous brief notices in *Israel Exploration Journal* and *Revue Biblique* from 1975 to 1982.
 - 25 Oren and Morrison 1993, 2: 580–4 summarizing reports on 'Gerar' (1983, 1984, 1985, 1989/1990).
 - 26 Helga Weippert 1988: 615.
 - 27 A. Mazar, 1974: 276 and 1975: 266–8, stated that the fortress was destroyed by fire but withdrew this conclusion a few years later, 1982a. However, in 1993, 1: 15 he still maintained that the village at the foot of the hill on which the fortress stood was destroyed during the downfall of the Judaean Kingdom, but presents no evidence. One cannot help wondering why the Babylonians would leave the fortress standing and destroy the village.
 - 28 The archaeological data on the fall of Jerusalem have been widely publicized; it will therefore suffice to refer the reader to the bibliography in Stern et al. 1993, 2: 716. Evidence for the destruction of Ramat-Rahel at the same time is less compelling. According to the

- excavator, Y. Aharoni, who identified Ramat-Rahel with Beth-Haccherem, the late Iron II citadel was destroyed by fire in 597 or 586 BC. However, the evidence he cites seems to be confined to the stone paving of the gate passageway leading from the inner citadel together with a seal impression belonging to a certain Eliakim (*l'lyqm n'r ywkn*). This impression is identical with the one found at Tell Beit Mirsim, which, as noted earlier, persuaded Albright that stratum A2 of this site was destroyed in 586 BC. See Aharoni 1967: 171–84; 1993b, 4: 1261–7.
- 29 While Jer. 34:7 obviously alludes to a situation well into the Babylonian conquest of the country, the 'Hoshaiah file' preserved on the ostraca reflects the tense situation preceding the arrival of the Babylonian army rather than actual warfare, e.g., the mission of Coniah the army commander to Egypt presumably to solicit assistance (ostracon 3:13–16). See Ussishkin 1992, 4: 114–26; 1993, 3: 897–911; Weinberg 1969: 81.
- 30 Stern 1993, 1: 123–4 with bibliography.
- 31 Dever 1993, 2: 496–506.
- 32 Fargo 1993, 2: 630–4.
- 33 B. Mazar 1967a: 85–6; 1967b: 222–30; 1993, 2: 399–405; B. Mazar and Dunayevsky 1967: 133–43.
- 34 Pritchard's many publications on Gibeon are summarized in 1993, 2: 511–14. See also Eshel 1987: 1–17.
- 35 Broshi 1975b, 3: 912–18; Zorn 1993, 3: 1098–102; 1994: 31–48.
- 36 Here, too, Albright claimed to find evidence of destruction from 586 BC. The most recent account is Kelso 1993, 1: 192–4.
- 37 The inscription on the seal reads *lgdlyhw {'}šr 'l bhyt*, literally, 'belonging to Gedalyahu who is over the house [palace]'. On this Lachish bulla see Tufnell 1953: 348. Avigad 1986: 24–5 suggests that another bulla inscribed *lgdlyhw 'bd hmlk* ('belonging to the royal official Gedalyahu') may refer to the same person since the script is identical.
- 38 Badè 1933: 150–6.
- 39 *b'nôt hammelek*, the king's daughters, should probably be understood literally rather than referring to harem women.
- 40 See n. 35.
- 41 On the Assyrian provincial system Alt 1964 [1929]: 188–205 is still of basic importance. The provinces of Samerina, Magidu (corresponding to the Galilee), Duru (Dor, the coastal region) and Galazu (Gilead, east of the Jordan) were carved out of the Kingdom of Samaria between 732 and 722 BC.
- 42 Alt, 'Das System der Assyrischen Provinzen', 188, notes that the provincial system set up by the Assyrians remained basically unchanged down to the Seleucids.
- 43 Bethel continued as a cult centre *after* the Assyrian conquest of Samaria (2 Kgs 17:27–8) and together with Mizpah is the site of cultic activity in the tribal war against Benjamin (Judg. 20–1). A prophetic text from the early Persian period, before the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple (518 BC) may indicate that it still had a role at that time (Zech. 7:1–3, reading 'Sareser, Regemmelek and his people sent to Bethel to entreat the favour of Yahweh . . .').
- 44 The silence is especially noticeable in texts from the Persian period including Ezra–Nehemiah. No 'sons of Aaron' appear in the census list of more than 4,000 priests in Ezra 2 (= Neh. 7), the Aaronite pedigree of Ezra is taken from the priestly genealogy in 1 Chr. 5:27–41, and the two allusions to Aaronite priests in Nehemiah (10:39–40 and 12:47) are later than the time of Nehemiah. The priests in the Jewish settlement on the island of Elephantine in Upper Egypt are never called Aaronite.
- 45 Exod. 32:1–29; 1 Kgs 12:28–33; Judg. 20:27–8.
- 46 Porten 1968; idem, in Davies and Finkelstein 1984: 372–400.
- 47 Adams and Nissen 1972: 55–7; Adams 1981: xiv, 186–90.
- 48 Eph'al 1978: 74–90; Bickerman 1984: 342–58; Dandamaev 1984: 330–42.
- 49 On the Murashu archive see Stolper 1985, and on Judaeans names in the tablets Zadok 1988: 305–12.
- 50 Wiseman 1966: 154–8; Eph'al 1978: 76–80; Bickerman 1984: 349.
- 51 On the *bēt 'abôt* see Weinberg 1973: 400–14.

- 52 The Elephantine temple was built before the Persian conquest and was destroyed in 411 BC. See Cowley 1923: 108–24.
- 53 Jehoiachin was exiled in 597 BC. by Nebuchadrezzar and released or paroled after thirty-seven years by Amel-marduk (2 Kgs 24:12, 15; 25:27–30). On the administrative documents from Babylon published by E. F. Weidner in 1939 that mention Jehoiachin (Ia-ku-u-ki-nu) and his five sons see *ANET* 308. Jehoiachin's return was being predicted – unsuccessfully – even before 586 (Jer. 28:4). For the post-disaster period see Jer. 23:5–6; 33:14–22; Ezek. 34:23–24; 37:4; Amos 9:11–12.
- 54 The alternative opinion that the so-called Second Isaiah lived in Judah and addressed Judaeans has been defended from time to time, most recently by Barstad 1982: 77–87; 1987: 90–110.
- 55 *ANET* 60–72.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

ISRAEL UNDER PERSIA AND GREECE



Lester L. Grabbe

Many people think of the period of the Israelite monarchy as being the genuine time of Israel's history, and that the period after the exile – the 'post-exilic period' – is only an appendix to that history. Without going into the questions of terminology (since some would restrict the term 'Israel' to the northern kingdom which was conquered by the Assyrians about 722 BCE), one can say with some vigour that the post-exilic period was one of great importance and productivity for the literature, religion, and even self-identity of the Jewish people. More and more scholars are coming to regard the Hebrew Bible as by and large a product of this period.

The problem we have with the post-exilic period is that for the first couple of centuries our sources are brief, often of questionable reliability, and cover only a portion of the period even at their most optimistic reading. Many histories of this period either naively read the sources at face value or are very speculative – or even both together. It is important that historians make clear to the reader where we have evidence and where we are trying to fill in gaps by educated guesses.

Those readers used to histories and biographies relating to more recent times will be disconcerted to find how scanty are our sources and how little we really know about much of ancient history. We are dependent on a handful of sources, in some cases written long after the events they purport to describe and often with a clear bias. This means that different researchers will interpret some aspects of this history in quite different ways. Readers who read other accounts of the Jews in the Persian and Greek periods may find that my reconstruction differs considerably at some points from others. In some cases, this is because of new sources, but usually it depends on a question of methodology. On the whole, specialists for these periods are becoming more critical and sceptical of their sources and more alert to the biases contained in them. They are less likely to take the sources at face value but to question them closely and recognize the limitations on our knowledge. My chapter here reflects this more 'hard-headed' approach to writing the history of the Jews at this time.

We shall consider the period in question, which extends from Cyrus the Persian's conquest of Babylon to the taking of Jerusalem by the Roman general Pompey (c. 539–63 BCE), in five parts: the Persian period, the Greek conquest, the Ptolemaic

period, Seleucid rule, and the Maccabean kingdom. Each section will begin with a brief outline of the sources available to us and the problems with writing a history of that particular period.

THE PERSIAN PERIOD

Jerusalem had been conquered in 587/586 BCE by the Babylonians. This was the time of the dominance by what is referred to as the Neo-Babylonian empire. The Neo-Babylonian control of Mesopotamia was relatively short lived, lasting less than a century (c. 612–539 BCE). Its most famous king was Nebuchadnezzar (called Nebuchadnezzar II, because another Nebuchadnezzar was a king of Babylon in 1126–1105 BCE) who ruled 604–562 BCE. His army took Jerusalem in 597 BCE and deported the king and his family and some of the upper class to Mesopotamia, according to the Bible (2 Kgs 24) and the *Babylonian Chronicles*. A decade later the Bible says that Jerusalem was destroyed after a long siege, the king blinded and taken captive, many of the leadership executed, and a large number of people transported to the Babylonian region (2 Kgs 25). Indeed, some biblical passages suggest that all the people were removed and the land left empty, but this disagrees with archaeology and also other biblical passages (cf. 2 Kgs 25:12). This period of ‘the exile’ lasted for about half a century. Then in 539 BCE Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon, establishing the Persian empire from Afghanistan to the Mediterranean and from the Black Sea to Egypt.

The Persian period lasted two centuries and began a new phrase in Israel’s history. The temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians and the king removed. The temple was eventually rebuilt under the Persians, but the kingship was not restored. Instead, Judah became a small and relatively unimportant province in the vast Persian empire, with a Persian governor appointed to oversee its affairs. Recent decades have seen an explosion of information on Persian rule. This comes partly from archaeology, though much of it is due to the finding, publication, and analysis of cuneiform texts from Mesopotamia and papyrus records in Aramaic and Egyptian from Egypt. Despite these valuable contemporary sources, for the broad outline of political events in Persian history we are still dependent on the classical Greek historians such as Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon. The Greek writers are very important, but they also give everything from a Greek perspective; no native Persian histories have been found (even if they ever existed, which is not certain). The Greek writers tell us only what was important to the Greeks and do not attempt a comprehensive history of the Persians. They also have a strong bias against non-Greeks, whom they called ‘barbarians’ and thought inferior in many ways. We have to keep these points in mind in reading any Greek version of Persian history.

For the history of the Jews, we have Aramaic documents from a Jewish colony at Elephantine in Egypt, the evidence of archaeology, and a few inscriptions. Otherwise, we are dependent on biblical writings (the references to the Jews in Greek writings are mainly later than the Persian period), including the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and some of the prophets (especially Haggai and Zechariah and probably Isaiah 56–66). Some other writings have also been suggested as coming from the Persian period, though there is disagreement among scholars: Esther, Jonah, Ruth, the Song

of Songs, and Job in its final form. Although the books of Chronicles were most likely completed in the early Ptolemaic period, they can probably also be used as sources for the Persian period in certain respects. There are two problems with using the biblical literature to reconstruct history: (1) the biblical writers are not interested in history in the way that moderns are, as an accurate record of the past, but have a strong theological and ideological aim. They want to tell us *the way it should have been* rather than *the way it was*. (2) At their most optimistic reading the relevant biblical books cover only a few years – much of the Persian history of the Jews is a complete blank as far as literary sources are concerned.

When Cyrus took over Babylonia he issued decrees allowing the return of divine images to their cults because the last Babylonian king had gathered many of them to Babylon. Although these decrees are now seen as examples of royal propaganda, they fit with the general biblical picture that some Jews from Babylonia were allowed to return to Judah. The book of Ezra 1–6 describes the initial return in a particular fashion, including the rebuilding of the temple under quite adverse conditions, and many take it more or less at face value. However, there are reasons to query its picture. For one thing, it suggests that a largely empty Judah had to be resettled and ignores the fact that most Jews had not been deported but thousands of their descendants still continued to live in and farm the land. Also the sequence of Persian kings in Ezra 4–5 is very mixed up; documents dated to kings decades and even almost a century later are used to stop work on the temple in the time of Darius. The author is likely to have been writing long after the events and with few sources at his disposal.

We know two facts with reasonable certainty: (1) that a considerable number of Jews migrated from Babylonia and settled in Judah over a long period after 539 BCE, and (2) that the destroyed temple was rebuilt at an unspecified time (though probably before 600 BCE). Beyond these facts we can say little with confidence. The first governor of the province may have been a man named Sheshbazzar. Ezra 1:8–11 mentions him as being delegated to bring back to Jerusalem the temple vessels, which had been taken away to Babylon as booty, but then he disappears from the story. However, Ezra 5:14 quotes a Persian document which states that he was governor of the province and that he ‘laid the foundations’ of the temple. The contradictions between these two texts is a good example of the problems we have with trying to reconstruct a history of this period. Beyond these two problematic texts, we know nothing more about Sheshbazzar; it is almost as if the writer of Ezra 1–6 has deliberately wanted to play down his role and remove him from the narrative as far as possible, in favour of Zerubbabel and Joshua. These two early figures in leadership positions were Zerubbabel who was governor of the province and Joshua who was high priest of the cult (Hag. 1:1). They are associated with the rebuilding of the temple, which seems to have begun (or rebegun, if Sheshbazzar had already laid the foundations) in the reign of Darius I (522–486 BCE), perhaps about 520 BCE (Hag. 1:1–2:1). How long it took to build depended very much on the resources the people could muster, though the alleged help from the Persian treasury is unlikely (Ezra 6:8–10) and the date of completion in only four years is suspect (Ezra 6:15). Given the limits on resources of material and manpower, the completion probably took much longer.

The next we read in the biblical text of the Jewish community around Jerusalem is many decades later, in the middle of the fifth century. About this time, Ezra and Nehemiah are said to have come to Jerusalem to introduce reforms in the religion, cult, administration, and practices of the community. Since the most trustworthy information is found in the book of Nehemiah, we begin our discussion there. At its heart, the book of Nehemiah seems to have an actual composition by Nehemiah himself (much of Neh. 1–6 and perhaps some of 13). Although events are given from his very particular perspective, which is highly partisan, he provided a contemporary account. Granted, his ‘Memorial’ or ‘Memoir’ has been edited and other material (mainly lists of various sorts) added to produce the present book of Nehemiah, but we are on surer ground here than with some other sources.

Nehemiah himself was sent as governor of the province of Judah (Neh. 5:14) with the specific commission to repair the city wall (Neh. 1–2). The building of this wall was more than just a chance to provide surer defences for the city: it furnished the means of a much more centralized and controlled administration. Nehemiah describes various ‘enemies’ who threatened his enterprise (Neh. 2:19–20; 4:1). One of these was Sanballat the governor of Samaria who would have been a natural rival to the governor of a neighbouring province. The Persian administration tended to permit semi-autonomous governors, who were allowed to function with considerable personal discretion. This encouraged rivalry among administrators of equal rank, especially among the satraps who ruled huge territories and were kings in miniature. Keep in mind that the terms ‘satrap’ and ‘satrapy’ were sometimes loosely used in ancient writings, even being applied to lesser provinces; but there were only about twenty genuine large satrapies in the Persian empire, with Judah in the one that took up all the region west of the Euphrates. Provincial governors had much less power, but they seem to have exercised it in their own province much as the satraps did. So for Nehemiah and Sanballat, as rulers of neighbouring provinces with a certain amount of power at their disposal, to be suspicious of one another and even adversaries is not surprising (though the satrap of the region would probably have kept some control to prevent this from getting out of hand). Another ‘enemy’ was Tobiah. Despite Nehemiah’s attempts to slander him as an ‘Ammonite slave’, he was evidently the head of an old Jewish family with its ancestral home across the Jordan. Despite Nehemiah’s fierce hatred of him, Tobiah had many friends and allies in Jerusalem who also co-operated with Nehemiah (Neh. 6:17–19). Therefore, we must not assume that Nehemiah’s version of events was the only true one – as so often, there was more than one side to the story.

Among Nehemiah’s aims seems to have been a desire to create a rather isolated religious community, governed by strict obedience to the law, which would have little to do with its neighbours and thus avoid ‘foreign’ influences. His first project, which was the repair of the city wall, as well as other measures he took, would have been a means to this end. As soon as he arrived he enlisted the community to help repair the wall, with stories of how Sanballat intended to threaten the community. Whether there was a real threat may be questioned – the satrap over the two of them is unlikely to have allowed things to go that far – but it would have helped to motivate the community. For this and other reasons, the people as a whole seem to have been behind the repair of the wall, which was done in a comparatively short period of time.

Nehemiah also brought in the community leaders and elders and a significant portion of the province's population to live in Jerusalem – and they seem to have had no choice in the matter (Neh. 7:4–5; 11:1–2). This would have allowed him to keep a close eye on the leadership and to exercise considerable control over the actions of the people (as the examples in Neh. 13 suggest). Thus, he seems to have succeeded in whipping the community into the shape of his own idealism, at least temporarily, but as soon as he was away for an extended period of time, the people reverted to a more relaxed way of doing things (cf. Neh. 13:4–31). This did not mean that they abandoned their religion or turned to pagan worship; it was just that they did not agree with Nehemiah's narrow 'fanatical' approach. If we look at the subsequent history of the community over the next 200 years or so, the people as a whole seem to have rejected Nehemiah's vision, even though, from all we can tell, they would still have regarded themselves as pious Jews. As has recently been pointed out, Nehemiah's actions look very much like those of a sect founder and leader. That is, he tried to treat fellow Jews as outsiders. Up until this time, Jews were all accepted as part of an ethnic community. The idea that ethnic Jews could be expelled from the community and from worship at the temple is characteristic of later sects like the Essenes. In certain ways, Nehemiah is the first Jewish sectarian known to us in history.

Unlike Nehemiah, Ezra is a shadowy figure. According to Ezra 7 he was given enormous personal power in the province and satrapy and unimaginable wealth to take to the Jerusalem temple. Yet he exercises none of the power when he has to address a crisis, and the 25 plus tonnes of silver and gold that he allegedly brought to Jerusalem is simply incredible. Ezra is supposed to have brought a law (but the law had been observed in Jerusalem and the temple for nearly three-quarters of a century); he was supposed to resolve a problem of mixed marriages (but others take the initiative; in any case, the women married were probably the descendants of Jews not taken captive; and Nehemiah had to deal with exactly the same problem a few years later); and he was in Jerusalem at the same time as Nehemiah (yet they seem to have had nothing to do with each other, and Nehemiah never mentions him). All in all, what we have in the story of Ezra (Ezra 7–10; Neh. 8) is a figure of legend rather than history.

So, if we cannot take Ezra 7–10 at face value, what are we to make of Ezra as a historical figure? No doubt an actual historical individual lies behind the legend. He was not as central to the history of Jewish law as the book of Ezra makes him, however, because he is ignored by Nehemiah and also by the later writing of Ben Sira (often known as Ecclesiasticus) about 200 BCE who mentions Nehemiah but not Ezra. Either Ben Sira did not know of Ezra or he did not consider him important. This ignorance would have been impossible in later Judaism when Ezra became a key figure as a lawgiver. Yet the legend that Ezra even restored the law after it was lost (4 *Ezra* [2 *Esdras*] 14) is indicative that he had something to do with the law. He was probably much less important than Nehemiah and only later became elevated to a position of prominence as the tradition developed.

One of the main emphases in Ezra and Nehemiah is the exclusivism of the Jewish community in Judah. According to these books the Jews should remain separate from the surrounding peoples (who are seen as 'foreigners', even though most were

probably descended from Jews who had not been taken captive to Babylon). They assume that only the community created by the returned exiles has legitimacy. Having read these books, some people assumed that this was the only perspective of the biblical writers. However, if books such as Jonah and Ruth are from this period of time, as many argue, we have a quite different point of view. According to Ruth, even the great king David was descended from a Moabite woman, a foreigner who had nevertheless been in every way a model of faithfulness and loyalty. Similarly, the book Jonah tells how the Assyrians – the enemies of Israel – repented at Jonah's preaching and had been spared, something which the Israelites had not done according to many statements in the prophetic books. It has been strongly suggested that these books are deliberately opposing the policy of isolation and exclusivism espoused by the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Even using the biblical writings to their full we have at the most a history of the Jews at two brief points in the Persian period, with the entire last century of Persian rule a virtual blank. Josephus mentions an episode in which a high priest named Johanan killed his brother in the temple (*Ant.* 11.7.1 §§297–301). As a result the Persian governor Bagohi punished the Jews by placing a special tax on temple offerings. If historical, this episode would have been about 400 BCE (though some want to date it much later, about 340 BCE). Archaeology suggests two major catastrophes in which a number of cities and villages were destroyed. These would have been about the years 480 and 380 BCE, but there is no clear reference to them in the written records, a fact that emphasizes how little we know of the Jews in this period.

For this entire period Judah was a small province in a vast Persian empire. Through most or probably even all this period, there was a Persian governor over the province. In some cases, we know that this governor was Jewish, including Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, and Nehemiah. If a set of seals from the early Persian period is genuine, we also have the names of some other Judaeen governors who were evidently Jewish as well, as indicated by their names. It has further been suggested, based partly on coins, that the high priest also held the office of governor of Judah in the latter part of the Persian empire. If so, this fits the situation we know of from the Ptolemaic and Seleucid periods in which the high priest was also the main administrative official of the province.

THE GREEK CONQUEST

Alexander the Great's army crossed into Asia Minor in 334 BCE and challenged Persian rule. The first Persian defeat at Issus in 333 showed that the Persian empire was coming to an end, and the last Persian king Darius III was defeated at Gaugamela in 331. Alexander continued to march east for several more years, reaching northern India, but by this time his troops had had enough. He returned to Babylon to consolidate his rule but died shortly afterwards in 323. Since he had designated no successor, a serious power vacuum was left. His generals (who became known as the *Diadochi*, 'successors') moved to fill it, and the next 40 years saw battles between great armies all over the ancient Near East as the power shifted and different leaders came and went. The final result was a threefold division of Alexander's empire

between his general and companion Ptolemy in Egypt; the former chief of Alexander's elite bodyguard Seleucus over much of Asia Minor, northern Syria, and most of the eastern part of the empire; and the Antigonid dynasty over the mainland of Greece and Thrace. Although much of the eastern part of the Seleucid empire was lost from about 250, this division of rule remained in place for the most part until the Romans gained control in the mid-second century BCE.

Our knowledge of the Jews during this period is very skimpy, mainly a few literary bits and pieces whose information is not easy to evaluate. One story we can reject fairly easily. This is the legend that Alexander visited Jerusalem in the initial part of his conquest on his way to Egypt. This story is found in various versions, the earliest being that of Josephus (*Ant.* 11.8.1–6 §§304–45). According to it, the Jews refused to provide aid in the siege of Tyre. Alexander came to punish them but, because of a dream, instead bowed before the Jewish high priest and honoured the Jews. There are several reasons for doubting this account. Although the main history of Alexander by Arrian tells about this part of the campaign in great detail, he says nothing about a trip to Jerusalem, nor was there time between the siege of Tyre and the siege of Gaza for it to have taken place. Arrian has no bias against Alexander's interest in Oriental religions and would have had no reason to omit such a visit to Jerusalem. Also, the story has all the hallmarks of a piece of Jewish propaganda. In addition, Josephus claims that the high priest showed the book of Daniel to Alexander, but there is a strong consensus in modern scholarship that Daniel was written long after Alexander.

We also have the statement of Agatharchides of Cnidus (as quoted in Josephus, *Ant.* 12.1.1 §§3–10; *Ag. Apion* 1.22 §§209–12) that Ptolemy I captured Jerusalem at one point during the wars of the Diadochi, though he gives no reason why Ptolemy needed to capture the city nor when that took place. Josephus also tells us that a Jewish high priest named Ezekias (the Greek form of Hezekiah) came to Egypt with many of his people and asked to settle there, which Ptolemy I allowed. The most recent study of this text argues that this is the fabrication of a Jewish writer about 100 BCE; if this evaluation is correct, we cannot use this passage as historical information for the early Greek period.

The most valuable piece of information is a passage on the Jews that is supposed to have originated with Hecataeus of Abdera about 300 BCE (quoted by Diodorus of Sicily 40.3.1–8). It tells how the Jews left Egypt and came to Palestine under the leadership of Moses. There they set up an ideal state in which there was no king; rather, the priests chose the most pious of their number to be both high priest and civil leader of the country. They had no images of the gods but worshipped the heavens as divine. The people were willing to obey the instructions of the priests who also acted as judges and guardians of the law. If this description sounds rather utopian, it is because Hecataeus probably got much of his information from a source that ultimately goes back to Jewish priests. This is why he knows nothing of the monarchic period when there were indeed kings over the Jews. The Greeks were interested in exotic Oriental peoples who seemed to live a philosophical life, and Hecataeus appears to be giving an idealized version of Jewish history and government. Nevertheless, Hecataeus's account gives an important insight into the state and society of Judah shortly after the Greek conquest.

Apart from these brief notes we have no further direct references to the Jews. However, we can be fairly sure that the wars of the Diadochi between Alexander's death and about 280 BCE meant there was often military activity in and around Palestine. For example, the battle that allowed Seleucus to return from Egypt to Babylon, an event that began the use of the Seleucid era for calendar reckoning (a widely used means of dating before the BC/AD system developed about 600 CE), was fought at Gaza. It has been suggested that the 'giants' who devastated the earth in the book of *1 Enoch* (7:3–11; 9:21–9; 10:26–35) were modelled on the Diadochi and their armies.

PTOLEMAIC RULE

At various times during the wars of the Diadochi, the fighters would come to temporary agreements. But most of these lasted only a brief period of time before one or other of the parties broke the treaty and started the fighting once again. An important treaty was agreed to in 301, which assigned southern Syria and Palestine to the Seleucid territory; however, Ptolemy seized the territory and refused to give it up. Because Seleucus was in Ptolemy's moral debt he did not press his claim, but his successors did not give it up. The result was a series of 'Syrian wars' fought between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires throughout the third century until the Seleucids finally about 200 BCE took what they always regarded as rightly theirs.

Under Ptolemaic rule Palestine and southern Syria were treated as if they were a part of Egypt. The main concern of the Ptolemaic rulers was to maximize tax revenue, and Syro-Palestine was a rich source for it. There were Ptolemaic officials down to the village level to supervise the collection of taxes. This meant that the foreign ruler was not just a dim and distant patriarchal figure but in some sense a daily presence for most Jews. At the lower level the Ptolemaic officials might be local people used by the administration, but the governmental supervision seems to have been much closer and omnipresent than under previous rulers. It is not clear whether there was a separate governor responsible for Syro-Palestine. Some scholars think so, but others argue that the region was supervised by the Ptolemaic court much as was any other region of Egypt. Whether it was one or the other probably made little difference to the average inhabitant of the region.

In some ways, Judah in the Ptolemaic period is as obscure as in the Persian period, but we do have two valuable sources. The first is the Zenon papyri. Zenon was an agent of the finance minister Apollonius who was next in power to the king himself. Apollonius had many personal as well as official interests in Syro-Palestine (Ptolemaic officials did not seem to make a distinction between personal and governmental business), and he sent Zenon on a year-long tour through the region in the year 259 BCE. Afterwards, Zenon kept up correspondence for a number of years with some of those he met. The documents from his tour and subsequent communications were collected in an archive that got buried and preserved in the Fayum area of Egypt where it was rediscovered about a century ago and has now been published. These papyri have provided valuable historical information, especially about the workings of the Ptolemaic administration and economic matters. There are also some references to individuals who can be identified as Jews.

The second main source for the Ptolemaic period is the history of the Tobiads found in Josephus (*Ant.* 12.4.1–11 §§157–236). The exact origin of this story is uncertain, though it was probably based on some sort of chronicle preserved by the Tobiad family. There are some problems since the story is clearly legendary in parts, yet the general outline has been confirmed at crucial points by references in other sources. This is why scholars have accepted the overall narrative while being somewhat sceptical of the details.

The Tobiads were an old Jewish aristocratic family living in the Transjordanian area who were important players in the Persian period (see above under ‘Persian Period’) and continued to be active at least into the Seleucid period. The Zenon papyri show a Tobias who was head of a military colony in the Transjordanian area and clearly an important local man. The troops under his control were by no means all Jews but a mixture of nationalities. This Tobias was of sufficient stature to host Zenon’s large entourage and later to send gifts to the king.

In Josephus we find the continuation of the family history. A son (or possibly grandson) of Tobias was named Joseph. The Tobiads had married into the high priestly family (called the Oniads); the high priest seems to have continued his role as spokesman and representative of the Jews before the Ptolemaic government and apparently had some sort of official capacity in relation to tax collection. The high priest Onias refused to pay a sum of money to the Ptolemies. The exact reason for this is still debated, though it may well have had to do with pro-Seleucid views and the expectation that the Seleucids might soon take control of the Syro-Palestinian territory. However, the people were afraid that this would bring punishment on the whole province by the government. Joseph intervened to pay the money owed. He then bid for the tax farming rights over the province. (Tax farming was a system of collecting indirect taxes, such as those on buying and selling, which were hard to supervise. The tax farmer agreed to pay a certain amount to the king. If he did not collect that much, he had to make up the difference; if he collected more, that became his profit.) Having obtained the right to collect taxes, Joseph became a significant figure at court. He exercised this influential position and amassed great wealth for the next 20 years.

Joseph had eight sons, the youngest of whom showed the same entrepreneurship as his father. This son, named Hyrcanus, borrowed money and went to the Ptolemaic court where he managed to displace his father as tax farmer and court presence. This created a family breach, with Hyrcanus on one side and Joseph and his other sons on the other. Many feel that the breach was more than just personal rivalry but involved strong political views, with Hyrcanus being pro-Ptolemaic while Joseph (despite being the former darling of Ptolemy) and his other sons had switched to supporting the Seleucids. Hyrcanus turned out to be wrong, and the others right, for not long after Hyrcanus obtained his position Antiochus III defeated the Egyptians and took control of all Syria and Palestine in 200 BCE. Hyrcanus retired to the Transjordanian estate but saw the handwriting on the wall when Antiochus IV became king in 175 BCE. According to Josephus, he then committed suicide.

SELEUCID RULE

The Seleucids claimed that Syro-Palestine was rightfully theirs and tried throughout the third century to retake it from the Ptolemies. When the dynamic ruler Antiochus III (223–187 BCE) came to the throne, he soon launched an attack on Egypt but was defeated at the battle of Raphia in 217. However, with a new ruler some years later (Ptolemy V [204–180]), Antiochus tried again and succeeded in 200 BCE. It has often been asserted that Seleucid rule was different from Ptolemaic rule, which it was to some extent, but there is no evidence that these differences mattered as far as the Jews were concerned, as we shall see below.

We have a number of sources for this period. The most important are the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees, but these will be discussed in the next section. Very important is the book of Jesus ben Sira, often referred to as Ecclesiasticus (cited as Ben Sira below). Written sometime between about 195 and 175 BCE, this is a wisdom book in the usual tradition and says little directly on political history. However, it tells us a lot about society in Palestine, and there is one important reference to the high priest Simon II. Josephus also has some significant material, including a decree of Antiochus III concerning the Jews (*Ant.* 12.3.3–4 §§138–46).

Many Jews welcomed Seleucid rule. As already noted, this was probably true for Joseph Tobiad and all but one of his sons. Some Jews helped Antiochus III to take Jerusalem. As a result, Antiochus issued a decree acknowledging this help and providing temporary relief from taxes to help in restoring the war damage to the city. The traditional Jewish religious rights were also reaffirmed by this decree, though it should be noted that this was by negotiation (2 Macc. 4:11). From all we know, the first quarter of a century of Seleucid rule was peaceful. Only one incident marred this tranquility: according to 2 Maccabees 3, Seleucus IV (187–175 BCE) sent a minister to confiscate the temple treasury. The reason for this is uncertain, though it is significant that Hyrcanus Tobiad (who was pro-Ptolemaic) had a large sum on deposit there (2 Macc. 3:10–11). For some reason, the task was apparently not carried out (2 Maccabees ascribes this to supernatural intervention).

Things changed when Antiochus IV (175–164 BCE) came to the throne, though not for the reasons many think. As far as we can tell, Antiochus had no particular interest in the Jews nor any ideological mission with regard to Hellenization. Because his father (Antiochus III) had been defeated by the Romans, he had had to spend many years in Rome as a hostage. He was returning home when his brother (Seleucus IV) was assassinated, so he seized the throne (Seleucus's son was only a boy). His main concern was to establish Seleucid control over Egypt, and he began immediate preparations to do this. He was hardly concerned to become involved with the small province of Judah in his empire; he had much more important things on his mind. Nevertheless, he became involved with the Jews in a way that caused great trauma not only to them but to himself, through the following circumstances.

When the Greeks conquered the ancient Near East, they brought Greek culture and language to the region. Most of those in the Greek armies did not return home but were given property in the conquered area by Alexander and his successors to settle. They founded cities on the model of those in the homeland. In such a city (called a *polis*) the citizens had many privileges, including government of the city

itself. Only the Greeks were citizens; even if natives were allowed to live in the city, they were not citizens. A gymnasium was established in each city. The gymnasium was more than just a place for exercises; it served as an important centre and focus for educational, cultural, and recreational activities, and the place where the trainee citizens were educated and prepared for their duties. Physical sport was an important part of this education, but the young men (and occasionally women) were trained in Greek language, literature, and rhetoric.

Initially, the Greeks were not interested in mixing with the natives and certainly not in spreading their own culture to them. (It is alleged that Alexander had just such a vision of a cultural synthesis between the Greeks and the Orientals but, if so, his premature death cut short any such development.) The impetus to participate in Greek culture arose from the side of the native populations. This came about first among the aristocracy who were in constant contact with the conquerors and also had the opportunity and means to gain a Greek education. But the Ptolemaic and then the Seleucid government and administration reached down to the village level. Although the native languages continued to be used in daily life and in the lower echelons of administration, the higher levels of government were carried out in Greek. Anyone wanting to advance beyond a certain point needed knowledge of Greek. There was another aspect, however: many Near Eastern peoples, the Jews included, found some or even many aspects of Greek culture attractive. People of intellect and education would have found pleasure in Greek literature and the various forms of Greek entertainment.

The process of Hellenization was a complex process. The elements of Greek culture did not displace the millennia-old ancient Near Eastern cultures; instead they became an addition to the diverse mixture to create a new synthesis we can call 'Hellenization'. Within the Hellenistic world, there were those who saw various aspects of Greek culture as symbolic of conquerors, occupiers, and oppressors; others perhaps opposed some parts of the Greek presence but welcomed other parts. Above all, many elements of Greek culture entered the common heritage and ceased to be recognized as foreign, so that Greek influence was widespread even below the recognition level.

After almost a century and a half of this process of Hellenization, the Jerusalem leadership decided it was time to join the 'modern' world. Led by Jason, the brother of the high priest, they approached the new king Antiochus IV and proposed that Jason become high priest in place of his brother Onias (III), with the inducement of a large sum paid to the imperial coffers. In addition, they offered a further sum if Jerusalem was allowed to become a *polis*, a city organized along Greek lines. As far as we can tell, Antiochus had no particular interest in the Jews, and was not out to interfere in their internal affairs; however, he was interested in all the money he could get because of his plans to invade Egypt. He agreed to the request of the Jason faction, and the 'Hellenistic reform' began in Jerusalem. Onias was removed from office and replaced by Jason. The old constitution was removed, a list of citizens was drawn up, and a gymnasium was built for the training of new potential citizens.

Contrary to what you may read in many popular accounts, however, the temple worship and the Jewish religion as a whole was not affected. This is very clear from the hostile account of 2 Maccabees which is our main source about the Hellenistic reform. Despite its loathing of Jason and its colourful rhetoric, it cannot point to

any concrete breach of the law on Jason's part. In any case, Jason's power base was still the temple and the cult, and it would not have been in his interest to tamper with their operation.

Jason's reform was short lived, however, lasting only about three years. Three brothers who were rivals to the Oniad family now intervened successfully. One of these was named Menelaus; he wrestled the priesthood away from Jason by offering even more money to Antiochus, and Jason fled the capital. The Hellenistic reform evidently came to an end. Also Menelaus was not careful to maintain Jewish law since he committed a number of acts that were definitely in violation of it (such as taking the Seleucid king into the temple).

THE MACCABAEAN REVOLT AND HASMONAEAN RULE

The Hellenistic reform and contest over the high priesthood moved quickly to the suppression of Judaism and the Maccabean revolt. (A new section is given here for convenience, but there is no real break in continuing events.) The main sources for this period are 1 and 2 Maccabees. Josephus gives only a somewhat garbled account in the *War*, and for the *Antiquities* he closely paraphrases most of 1 Maccabees. Although the revolt and later Hasmonean rule are referred to in Graeco-Roman sources, most of our detailed information is from the books of Maccabees. Both have quite useful information, but both have strong biases. Both were written after the revolt and restoration and see everything through the distorting lenses of these events. Both are also quite pro-Maccabaeen and have a tendency to glorify their deeds and to slight the contribution of others.

In late 170 or early 169 BCE Antiochus put into effect plans that he must have had from the beginning. He had prepared for five years; now he launched an attack on Egypt. It does not appear that he wished to become king of Egypt (as well as of the Seleucid realm) as such, but he wanted to bring it under his control by placing a Ptolemy of his choice on the throne. The invasion was very successful. Antiochus made the arrangements about rule he wanted and returned with great spoils. It was probably at this time that he visited Jerusalem, was unlawfully given a conducted tour of the temple by Menelaus, and then took a great deal of money from the temple treasury before returning in triumph to Antioch (2 Macc. 5:1, 15–21 associates it with the second invasion, but it is confused about the two invasions).

Antiochus's political arrangements in Egypt did not last, however, and two years later (spring of 168 BCE) he invaded again. This time Rome intervened. A Roman mission was already in the area; when they received word of the successful Roman outcome at the battle of Pydna, they confronted Antiochus and required him to withdraw from Egypt or become an enemy of Rome. Antiochus knew he could not fight Rome, so he reluctantly withdrew in July of 168 BCE. As he did so, he heard of what he took to be a revolt in Judaea and sent an army to put it down. What had happened was that Jason had heard a rumour that Antiochus had died in Egypt; this seemed an opportunity not to miss, so he attacked Jerusalem with the intent of taking back the high priesthood from Menelaus. His supporters took Jerusalem but Menelaus holed up in the citadel and could not be dislodged.

Antiochus's army (it is not clear that Antiochus led it) drove off Jason and captured Jerusalem, killing or enslaving many of the inhabitants (2 Macc. 5:14 gives the unlikely figure of 80,000). This would have seemed to be the end of the matter. The revolt had been put down, Menelaus was reinstalled as high priest, and Jason removed once and for all. Yet the text goes on to give an inexplicable chain of events. First, a governor was placed over Jerusalem and also over the neighbouring province of Samaria. This is not surprising since Antiochus wanted to see that there were no further revolts. But then another Syrian army was sent to take the city of Jerusalem, to kill the men and enslave the women and children. But why? And was not the population of the city killed and enslaved once already? This army found the city peaceable and used the Sabbath rest as the opportunity to carry out their terrible deed. This makes no sense (why attack a peaceable city?), and the text gives no hint as to why all this was supposed to have happened.

Finally, the king sent an Athenian to stamp out the practice of Judaism. This action was unprecedented in antiquity. We are used to centuries of religious persecution, but such persecution has normally been carried out by the monotheistic religions. The ancient polytheistic religions were inherently tolerant: if you accept many gods, there is no reason to deny genuine existence to the god of another people. Far from persecuting, even conquering armies often honoured the local deities, enlisting their aid as it were in defeating their worshippers (such conquests were often interpreted as punishment by the local deities for some sin or other). The Jews had revolted against Antiochus, but the revolt had been put down and things were calm once again. Why wake sleeping dogs? Why rouse the hostility of the Jews by trying to suppress their religion? Yet this is exactly what Antiochus did, and the reasons are still debated.

Some of the older suggestions of what Antiochus was trying to do by his attack on the Jewish religion have not stood up to investigation (though they are still widely repeated in popular literature). One is that he was trying to unify his empire by Hellenization, but there is no evidence that he undertook particular measures to impose Greek customs on the native people. In any case, Hellenization as a process was already 150 years old by his reign. It was once argued that he wanted the Jews to regard him as a god, but Antiochus did not act differently from other Seleucid rulers. It must be remembered that Antiochus initially became involved in internal Jewish affairs only because the Jews approached him, not the other way round. One suggestion is that Menelaus wanted to introduce an 'enlightened' form of Judaism that got rid of Judaism's 'superstitions'. Although this might make sense in a modern context, it does not fit well the ancient situation, and all we know about Menelaus does not suggest that he was an ideologue. Menelaus was probably in some way involved in the suppression, but his motives are unclear. Thus, despite a number of suggested solutions to the problem, the puzzle still remains.

Whatever the reasons for Judaism's being outlawed, it was a traumatic experience. Circumcision was forbidden, copies of the law scrolls were destroyed, and a pagan altar was built on the temple altar and swine were sacrificed on it. This came to be known in Jewish literature as 'the abomination of desolation' (perhaps a word play in Hebrew on the name of the Syrian deity whose worship was now introduced into the Jewish temple). This time the Jews revolted in earnest. According to the

books of Maccabees, the Maccabaeen family led the revolt, though many modern scholars are suspicious that the story is being told from a biased perspective that gives undue credit to the Maccabees. Nevertheless, the Maccabaeen brothers had a great deal to do with subsequent Jewish history.

Judas Maccabaeus soon took the main leadership role, with many Jews from over the country joining him as soldiers. Although he achieved some significant victories, modern studies have tended to discount the 'miraculous' nature of them, contrary to the image of the books of Maccabees. The initial battles may have had to depend more on guerrilla tactics and improvised strategy, but Judas's victories are normally explicable by the standard canons of warfare. Judas's most important achievement was rapidly developing his band of irregular fighters into a trained and equipped regular army that fought in the standard mode of the time.

Despite these military facts, it was in a rather remarkably short time of three years that Judas was able to retake the city of Jerusalem, cleanse the temple, and reinstitute the regular cult. The 'abomination of desolation' was at an end, and it was not long afterwards that the prohibition of Antiochus was withdrawn (Antiochus IV himself died about December 164). The Seleucid government seemed ready to come to terms, but the Maccabees refused. The original goal of restoring religious rights seems to have expanded to include the desire for national independence. Fighting continued intermittently. Judas besieged the citadel (the acra) of the city held by Syrian troops but could not take it. Then Judas himself was killed in the fighting about 162. This was a major setback, and for the next five years or so the Maccabees were more or less on the run. Jonathan replaced Judas as leader. The majority of Jews seem to have been content with a return to the *status quo*. The Seleucids appointed a new high priest, Alcimus, and many Jews were happy to accept him.

The determination of the Maccabees began to pay off in the late 150s, however, when the Seleucid throne became the object of contest between two rival dynasties. Jonathan astutely exploited this to his own advantage. Alcimus died about 152 BCE, leaving the office of high priest vacant. Jonathan was appointed high priest by one of the rival claimants to the throne, and the other rival confirmed him in the office. This did not end Judah's troubles, but it was a major step forward in establishing Maccabaeen leadership over the whole nation. Jonathan was eventually betrayed and executed by the Seleucids in 142 BCE and was succeeded by the third Maccabaeen brother Simon.

If there is a point which we can use as a convenient date for when Judah became once more an independent state, it would be under Simon (see 1 Macc. 13:41–2). In 140 BCE, the third year of his leadership, a decree by the people was issued, confirming the Maccabaeen leadership not only in the office of high priest but also in the role of political leadership (1 Macc. 14:27–47). This was a symbolic date and event, though the Seleucids had by no means given up their claims to Judah. Simon was assassinated by his son-in-law, and John Hyrcanus (Simon's eldest son) took the office of high priest. Jerusalem was besieged by a Seleucid army, and the siege was lifted only when John came to terms with Antiochus VII (138–129 BCE) – Seleucid rule was not yet dead. However, like his uncle, John exploited the rival Seleucid rulers to keep Judah's independence. John Hyrcanus's reign was probably one of the

most successful of the Maccabaeen rulers (or Hasmonaeen rulers as they are known, from an ancestor called Hasmon). He began to expand Jewish territory, conquering Idumaea and Samaria.

John Hyrcanus had three sons. The eldest, Aristobulus, became priest and national leader after his father's death but held the office only a year (104–103 BCE). We know little about him, though he is alleged to have been the first to take the title of 'king'. The previous Hasmonaeen rulers had the title of 'high priest' but, even though acting like kings, they had not used that title. From Aristobulus I on, the title 'king' was used by Jewish rulers. The Judaean monarchy, which had ceased to exist in 587 BCE, was once again restored. Aristobulus extended the territory of Judah into Galilee, and he is said to have killed his brother who was a rival and put the other brother, Alexander Jannaeus, into prison.

When Aristobulus I died after a brief reign, his widow Alexandra released Alexander Jannaeus from prison and married him. Alexander's reign (103–76 BCE) was a long but troubled one. He proceeded to expand his territory even further, taking much of the Transjordanian territory and further portions of Galilee. By the end of his reign he probably ruled more territory than any other Jewish king in history (Solomon is alleged to have controlled more, but this is probably legendary). However, a revolt of his own countrymen developed early in his reign. He suppressed it, but after Alexander suffered a defeat fighting the Nabataean king, a new revolt began and developed into what amounted to a lengthy civil war. His opponents eventually persuaded one of the many Seleucid claimants to the throne at this time, Demetrius III, to invade Judah. Alexander was defeated by Demetrius, but then many of the Jews fighting on Demetrius's side got cold feet, perhaps realizing that Judah might come back under Seleucid rule. When they left Demetrius's cause, he decided the best course of action was to retire from the country. Jannaeus took revenge by crucifying 800 of his enemies while he and his concubines feasted. It is often alleged that those crucified were Pharisees, but Josephus does not say this, and there is no evidence that only Pharisees opposed him. The Pharisees constituted a part of his opposition, however, according to the testimony of Josephus.

Jannaeus was succeeded in his rulership role not by one of his sons but by his wife Alexandra Salome (76–67 BCE). In one of his accounts of Jannaeus, Josephus states that on his deathbed the king ordered his wife to favour the Pharisees. Whether that is true is a matter of debate since Josephus makes no such claim in his other account. According to both accounts, though, his wife's rule was dominated by the Pharisees. This is an important situation because this is the only period in Judaean history that we know of in which the Pharisees actually had *de facto* control of the government. We read that they tried to gain control at various other times, but as far as our sources tell us, it was only under Alexandra Salome that they succeeded. As a woman she could not be high priest but appointed her elder son Hyrcanus (II) to the office; her younger son who seems to have been a dynamic individual led a rebellion against her that lasted until her death. Otherwise, she appears to have been a good administrator and managed by negotiation to prevent Tigranes king of Armenia from invading Judaea after he had conquered Syria.

After Alexandra's death Aristobulus seized power. Hyrcanus at first agreed to let Aristobulus rule and himself to stay out of public life except to exercise the office

of high priest. But an individual named Antipater suddenly appears on the scene and joins forces with Hyrcanus. Who this person was is not clear, though his father had apparently been the governor of Idumaea. In any case, he becomes an important figure in Jewish history at this point. He is also famous because his son Herod the Great became another king of the Jews. Antipater persuaded Hyrcanus that he would help him gain the Judaeian throne. Hyrcanus and Antipater together assembled an army and attacked Aristobulus who holed up in Jerusalem under siege. In order to break the deadlock both sides appealed to the Roman legate in Syria, the general Pompey.

Up until this time the Jews had had friendly relations with Rome, but the Romans had gradually extended their control over the eastern Mediterranean for the past century or so. It is likely that the Romans would have found a reason to bring Judaea under their control fairly soon, but the two warring brothers presented one on a plate. Pompey accepted bribes from both brothers but then sided with Hyrcanus. Aristobulus set off for Jerusalem as if he were going to refuse Pompey's decision, but then surrendered to the army Pompey sent after him. His followers continued to hold Jerusalem, however, and the Romans besieged it in the summer of 63 BCE. Even as the city was being taken by the Romans, the priests continued to carry out the regular sacrificial cult, and many were slaughtered at their posts. Pompey himself went into the temple. The next day, though, he ordered the temple to be purified and the cult resumed. Judaeian independence had come to an end. The Jews of Palestine would be ruled from Rome for another seven centuries until the Arab conquest.

CONCLUSIONS

The Persian and Greek periods saw great developments in Judaism and changes in the life and thought of the Jewish people. They had to adjust to living without a native monarch, becoming instead a small ethnic group centred on one of the many provinces of a great empire. The high priest functioned as the chief administrator and representative of the people, and under the Persians a provincial governor was appointed part or all of the time. Nevertheless, the Jews were free to practise their religion, and the temple and priesthood functioned without major hindrance through most of this period. As long as they paid their taxes and did not threaten rebellion they were allowed to get on with their lives. Most Jews seemed to accept this state of things. Yet it was impossible to entirely avoid becoming entangled in the broader political arena; what is more, some Jewish families were major players in the regional political games. For better or for worse, these families proved to be the catalyst to major changes in the life of the nation.

Although not part of a family as far as we know, Nehemiah was a dynamic individual who tried to create a Jewish state with strict adherence to a set of religious laws and greatly reduced ties with the external world. His vision prevailed for a time but was ultimately rejected by the people. One of Nehemiah's rivals, the Tobiad family, played a significant role in regional politics over many generations, at times even gaining considerable power and influence in the government of the Palestinian area. Another family was that of the Hasmonaeans who took over the high priest-

hood and rulership of the people for almost a century and continued to hold influence in the country at least until nearly the end of the first century CE. (Another family after our period is the Herodian; some want to deny the designation 'Jewish' to it but without good reason. Herod's father, Herod the Great himself, and Herod's descendants all identified themselves as Jewish as much as the Tobiads, Hasmonaeans, and many others.)

Significant religious changes and developments also occurred in these centuries. The temple and cult were restored in Jerusalem at the beginning of the Persian period, after lying desolate for a number of decades. Perhaps one of the most striking innovations was the rapid move to monotheism, a view of the divine world that was not the prevalent one during the period of the monarchy. Monotheistic trends can be observed at a much earlier time, perhaps being the view of some groups centuries before it spread to the whole of the Jews. But from the [first part](#) of the Persian period a monotheistic view seemed to prevail in Jerusalem and to make itself felt throughout Judaism fairly quickly; at least, evidence for the acceptance of other gods quickly disappears.

The centre of Israelite religion, like that of other north-west Semitic religions, was the altar and cult site. In Judah cultic rituals had become limited to the Jerusalem temple, at least by the Persian period. The temple cult was at the heart of Jewish worship during the entire Second Temple period. Without a king the Jews of Palestine looked to the priesthood for leadership. The high priest became the main representative of the Jews to the ruling powers and functioned as a political as well as religious leader through much of the period until the fall of the temple in 70 CE. The major threat to Jewish worship happened about 168 BCE with the attempt of Antiochus IV to suppress Jewish religion. The exact reason is uncertain, though the rivalry over the high priesthood preceded it and probably had something to do with it. With the restoration of the temple, however, another priestly family – that of the Hasmonaeans – resumed the traditional role of both political and religious leadership. Eventually, during Hasmonaean rule the high priest not only acted as, but even took the title of, 'king'.

Yet it was also probably during the Persian period that the written law, the Torah, began to become another focus of religious knowledge and worship. Many believe that much of the work of writing and editing what we now call the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament took place during this time, though many earlier traditions in both oral and written form were undoubtedly used. This allowed a unique development in Judaism not found elsewhere until many centuries later. Unlike other religions of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world of this time, Judaism became a religion of the book. This process was not finalized until after the temple was destroyed for good in 70 CE, and we must not forget the importance of the temple until its destruction. Yet developments that had begun centuries earlier – in the Persian and Greek periods – put Judaism on a course that led finally to the evolution of a new entity, called rabbinic Judaism, which made the Torah and its study the core of religion.

FURTHER READING

Most of the history in this chapter is discussed in greater detail, with references to original sources and modern scholarly studies, in:

Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*. Vol. 1: *Persian and Greek Periods*; Vol. 2: *Roman Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992; London: SCM Press, 1994).

A good deal of history, religion, and literature is also discussed in the following work written for students and lay people:

Lester L. Grabbe, *An Introduction to First-Century Judaism: Religion and Politics 539 BCE to 135 CE* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996).

The religion of Jews in this period is also covered to a great extent in the books listed above; however, the most detailed recent treatment is:

Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice from the Exile to Launch* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000).

These studies of mine will also serve to guide the reader to other relevant books and articles by modern scholars and will introduce the reader to original sources. Almost all the issues raised in this chapter will be discussed there in greater detail.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

JUDAEA UNDER ROMAN RULE: 63 BCE–135 CE

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Sarah Pearce

For knowledge of most of the first two centuries of substantial Roman involvement in Judaea, we owe the greatest debt to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (Rajak 1983). Thanks to him we have ‘by far the most important contemporary account of any event in the history of the Roman Empire’ (Millar 1994: 367). Nevertheless, for historians concerned with the reconstruction of an accurate portrait of the situation in Judaea in that period, Josephus’s works are widely acknowledged as providing not only a goldmine but also a minefield (McLaren 1998). Josephus’s personal situation was highly complex and has shaped his interpretation of this period in a variety of ways: for the period of the war, self-justification as a leading participant in the rebel side during the First Jewish Revolt against Rome, and then of his subsequent employment with the leaders of the Roman suppression of that revolt, Vespasian and Titus, as advocate for peaceful submission to Roman domination; in terms of his later position, apologist, in a hostile climate, for Jewish culture and especially for the Jewish political tradition, which his own class represented, of rule in Jerusalem by an aristocratic priestly class; and for the pre-war period, through his Hasmonaean ancestry, an inheritance of strong hostility towards the person of Herod the Great. (Rajak 1983; Feldman 1984).

Above all, however, Josephus’s accounts of this period are dominated by his concern to explain the reasons for the First Jewish Revolt and the catastrophe of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Thus, very much in the style of, and profoundly influenced by, deuteronomistic historiography, Josephus’s history tends to highlight factors that, in his view, contributed to what he saw as a supremely catastrophic event in which all events are both part of the divine plan and to be seen as divine response to the fidelity or infidelity of Jews to the divine teachings contained in the Law of Moses. The result is, through his selection and organization of details and his commentary on those details, a near-consistent portrayal of at least first-century CE Judaea as dominated by ‘turbulent times’ (McLaren 1998) and a sense of the inevitability of revolt and catastrophe. A careful reading of Josephus must attempt to discern to what extent this conception of the first century CE reflects the true state of affairs in that period. To that end it is imperative that historians do not accept uncritically Josephus’s portrait of Judaea as pregnant with

the potential for revolt: the many details of conflict before 66 CE that he provides must be examined carefully to assess how far they can properly be seen as playing any significant part in the outbreak of revolt or rather as isolated incidents in a less extraordinary environment.

Yet, for all his problems, Josephus is without parallel in his value as a source for this period. The other major surviving Jewish writer of the first century, Philo of Alexandria, has relatively little to say of the situation in Judaea except in relation to the political crisis under Gaius (*Legatio*). Roughly contemporary with Josephus's works, the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles offer some details about the political and administrative situation in Judaea in the time of Jesus and the early Christian movement, marked by traditions of a fairly thoroughgoing hostility towards the Jewish political leadership of that period (Sherwin-White 1963). Sources of other evidence include various kinds of anonymous Jewish literature, though much of this is concerned primarily with internal religious questions and not with the wider political environment (Charlesworth 1985; Vermes 1998). Roman writers like Tacitus and Dio, writing from a chronological and cultural distance, preserve some details of Rome's involvement in Judaea (Stern 1974–84). Material evidence provides vital contemporary evidence shedding light on many aspects of Judaea under Roman rule: Jewish inscriptions, for the most part, attest the names and preoccupations of deceased members of the elite class, while Roman inscriptions shed light mainly on military activities in the provincial era (Frey 1936–52, 1975; Rahmani 1994; Williams 1999); coins provide indicators of such things as political and religious ideology and, to some extent, the economic condition of the region (Meshorer 1982); the abundant archaeology of the region provides vitally important information about wealth and cultural influences behind building projects under Herod the Great and in the first century, while also providing valuable evidence about both rebellions (Meyers and Strange 1981; Avigad 1984; Stern et al. 1993; Meyers 1997).

For the period beyond that covered by Josephus, we are much less well informed about the situation in Judaea. Of greatest significance are the history of Dio, which provides the fullest account of the Second Jewish Revolt (132–5 CE); fragments from other Roman and Christian historians; some details in the largely ahistorical rabbinic writings; and, above all, the contemporary evidence for the Second Revolt in the form of rebel coinage and documents, and the archaeological record associated with the rebels and with the Roman forces (Schürer 1973: 6–124).

ON THE EVE OF ROME'S ARRIVAL: HASMONAEAN FEUDING.

Like many of the Hellenistic states of the first century BCE, no longer dominated by the former superpowers of Egypt and Syria, Hasmonaeon Judaea was torn apart by rival claimants to the throne (Jos., *BJ* 1.107–19; *AJ* 13.405–32). Even before the death of his mother Alexandra, Aristobulus, her younger son, had attempted to wrest power (or perhaps succeeded in doing so) from his brother Hyrcanus whom Alexandra had appointed as her sole heir, and who had assumed royal power during her lifetime in 69. On the queen's death in 67 BCE, Aristobulus backed his claim to Hyrcanus's position with military force, and an agreement was reached between

the brothers that both monarchy and probably also the high priesthood were to be assumed by Aristobulus (Jos., *BJ* 1.121–58; *AJ* 14.1–79).

Hyrchanus's apparent acceptance of this situation was not, however, tolerated by the enemies of Aristobulus. Foremost among these was Antipater, a powerful Idumaeen aristocrat, whose father had been *strategos* of Idumaea under Alexander Jannaeus. The status of Antipater himself is not clear at this period though he clearly had considerable influence in both Judaea and neighbouring Nabataea, as indicated by his marriage to a Nabataean royal, probably the daughter of King Aretas III. Antipater persuaded Hyrcanus to recover his throne through an alliance, based on acquiring military support in exchange for land, with Aretas. The success of Hyrcanus's cause now looked certain, as Aretas's forces easily overcame Aristobulus and looked set to take Jerusalem where Aristobulus had taken refuge and where his brother's supporters now besieged him during Passover. But the question of who would now take the throne was put on hold by the intervention of a much greater power, the Roman Republic.

Rome in the Near East

The Roman Republic had involved itself in the affairs of the East Mediterranean since the beginning of the second century BCE, defeating the Hellenistic kings of Macedon (197) and Syria (190). By the middle of that century Rome controlled large areas in the west of this region: Macedonia became a Roman province in 146, and in 133 the neighbouring kingdom of Pergamum was left to Rome by its late ruler and became the Roman province of Asia. Less than a century later, Rome had come to dominate the whole Mediterranean area with only the independent Parthian empire a plausible threat. This huge expansion resulted from measures to protect Rome's interests, to protect the new province of Asia and its Roman residents from external attack, and to clear the Mediterranean of the pirates who threatened the corn supply of the city of Rome (Crook et al. 1994).

Very different was the situation from the beginning of the first century BCE when Rome was faced with its most dangerous enemy since Hannibal. In Mithradates VI, powerful king of Pontus, Rome faced a formidable opponent who for nearly forty years exploited the various domestic and foreign crises that preoccupied the leaders of Rome to advance his ambition to expand his territory and to reduce Roman power in the region. The crisis posed by Mithradates was finally entrusted to the young general Pompey whose spectacular rise to influence depended on a remarkable record of successful military solutions to other major crises. In order to maintain that influence, which many in the Senate opposed, he depended on and sought further opportunities to show that Rome's security depended on him. Pompey's superior forces and strategies ensured that by the end of 66 Mithradates and his allies posed no further threat to Roman interests (Leach 1978: 78–101; Seager 1979; Sherwin-White 1994).

Pompey's attention now turned to other areas in the East, to ensure the security of newly acquired Roman territories and of independent but financially valuable places like Nabataea. Thus, under Pompey's direction, Rome intervened in the trouble spots of the region. Particular attention focused on the anarchic situation in

Syria on account of internal struggles between rival Seleucids, and the threat of Parthian invasion there; and the aggressive activities of Nabataea under Aretas, exploiting the troubles in Syria and in neighbouring Judaea where the civil war of the Hasmonaeans diverted Pompey's attention in 65.

Thus, the intervention of Scaurus, Pompey's general posted to Damascus in 65, in the affairs of Judaea was, as Josephus says, 'to snatch what seemed a god-sent opportunity' (Jos., *BJ* 1.127). Both Hasmonaeans parties made representations for support to the Roman who, on receipt of a considerable gift of money from Aristobulus, (and no doubt because Hyrcanus was allied with the problematic Aretas), backed his cause. Scaurus removed the immediate threat to Aristobulus, ending the siege of Jerusalem with the mere threat of Pompey's intervention (Jos., *BJ* 1.126–58; *AJ* 14.29–76).

Meanwhile, Pompey arrived in Damascus in 64 to organize Syria's affairs as a new province of Rome and to try to ensure the stability of the surrounding region. As for Judaea, Pompey heard representations both from Hasmonaeans parties but also from those who wanted an end to monarchy and instead government by priests (Jos., *AJ* 14.41ff; Diodorus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 40.2). No immediate decision about Judaea's government was taken on account of Pompey's concern to inspect the situation in Nabataea which, until recently, had held Damascus and intervened in Judaeans affairs (Bowersock 1983). Aristobulus, however, spoiled his chances of maintaining power in Judaea: first, by abandoning Pompey on his way to inspect Nabataea; then by preparing forces who tried to keep Pompey out of Jerusalem. Pro-Hyrcanus supporters gave up the city and its royal palace to the Romans, while the followers of Aristobulus retreated to the Temple, the strong point of the city, where they were besieged for three months. Hyrcanus's friends assisted the Romans with preparing the assault on the Temple, which was eventually taken when Pompey, probably on the advice of Hyrcanus's side, took advantage of the Jews' abstinence from non-defensive hostilities on the Sabbath and erected the siege equipment that broke down the opponents' resistance.

Capture of the Temple

The Temple fell to the Romans in the third month of the siege 'on the day of the fast', probably the Day of Atonement (10 Tishri, September–October) (Jos., *BJ* 1.148–54; *AJ* 14.64–66; Strabo 16.2.40). Aristobulus's supporters, including many priests, perished in the assault, most at the hands of Hyrcanus's followers, many by their own hand. Among Jews, however, and for a long time to come, Pompey's assault on the Temple was remembered with horror for a different reason. In spite of his characteristic respect for non-Roman religions, unusual in a Roman of his time, Pompey caused huge offence by entering the 'Holy Place', forbidden to all but the high priest, in order to view the Temple's treasures (Jos., *BJ* 1.152; *AJ* 14.72; *Pss Sol.* 2.3; 8.12–14).

Pompey's settlement

Josephus, reflecting his Hasmonaean heritage, preserves a profoundly negative reflection on this period when he remarks that, through the Hasmonaeans' dissension,

we lost our freedom and became subject to the Romans, and the territory which we had gained by our arms and taken from the Syrians we were compelled to give back to them, and in addition the Romans exacted of us in a short space of time more than ten thousand talents; and the royal power which had formerly been bestowed on those who were high priests by birth became the privilege of commoners

(AJ 14.77–8)

With the exception of the last point, his summary of the state of affairs in 63 is accurate. Judaea was treated like other states overcome by Rome: the former kingdom was made tributary to Rome, and it was stripped of various cities taken from the Seleucids (all coastal towns from Raphia to Dora; all ‘non-Jewish towns’ east of Jordan; Scythopolis and Samaria) by earlier Hasmonaeans. These were now incorporated into the province of Syria. That province and the whole area as far as Egypt and the Euphrates, including the land of Judaea, were left under the administration of Scaurus, governor of Syria (Jos., BJ 1.153–8; AJ 14.73–6). Territorial losses for Judaea were thus considerable, but the area ruled by its leader still reflected the legacy of the earlier Hasmonaeans’ conquests in what remained to him of Idumaea, Peraea, Galilee and Samaritis.

The claim that rule was now transferred to ‘commoners’ does not hold true for 63, but reflects the realities of a later period under Herod the Great who could not claim royal ancestry. Under Pompey, Hyrcanus was reinstated as high priest and ethnarch (head of the country), but not as king. Looking at things from a broad perspective, Rome’s settlement restored to Second Temple Period Judaea its traditional form of government, which many leading Jews had demanded of Pompey prior to the settlement. Hyrcanus’ powers were not insignificant (including the charge of the army and of the country’s revenue) and by many Jews he was indeed regarded as king.

By comparison with his administrative efforts in many places, Pompey’s arrangements in the East were minimal. This was especially true of Judaea, as Pompey was drawn away to settle the affairs of Pontus following the death of Mithradates just before the siege of Jerusalem. Consequently, the region remained unstable in places, including Judaea. For the time being, the situation in Nabataea, which Pompey had been so anxious to investigate, was settled peacefully from Rome’s point of view: with the aid of Antipater, Scaurus extracted money from Aretas in return for peace.

Josephus was right that the Hasmonaeans’ quarrel was the immediate cause of Roman intervention. But there is no doubt, with or without Hasmonaean conflict, that Rome would have come to dominate Judaeian affairs sooner or later. Before the First Revolt, all serious candidates for power in Judaea would appeal to Rome for support.

FROM HYRCANUS II TO HEROD THE GREAT

Though ethnarch of Judaea, Hyrcanus II was still answerable to the governors of Syria. In practice, however, because of the Romans’ preoccupations with other parts

of the region, there was no further Roman intervention in Judaea until 57 BCE. This allowed substantial opportunities for the Hasmonaean opposition to fight back. Though Aristobulus himself seemed finished, taken as prisoner to appear in Pompey's triumph of 61, his cause was not over yet. He and his sons, Alexander and Antigonos, continued to defy Rome's settlement of Judaea with a series of rebellions until Rome decided to install its own client king.

The early stage of the Hasmonaean opposition's efforts was countered by Aulus Gabinius, first governor of the now consular province of Syria (Appian, *Syr.* 51.256), appointed to deal with problems in the Syrian area, notably defending Roman-backed rulers in Egypt and Judaea. In Judaea he suppressed a series of unsuccessful revolts, led first by Alexander (57), and later, after their escape from Rome, by his father, Aristobulus, with the younger son, Antigonos (56). Their suppression was achieved with the aid of Jewish forces, showing that their claim was far from being universally supported in Judaea: indeed, the wife of Aristobulus is said to have offered express advice on preventing their revolutionary activities. The rebel Hasmonaean were returned to Rome.

In the wake of the destruction caused by these serious disturbances Gabinius imposed a new regime aimed at ensuring peace: the restoration and resettlement of afflicted areas; a new government in which Hyrcanus's powers were confined to the Temple, a clear sign of no confidence in his political abilities, and five regional aristocratic councils were to take charge of the other affairs of the ethnarchy. Nothing more is known of these *synhedria* (on the model of regional federations in Macedonia), except that they disappeared altogether under the governorship of Antipater and may, indeed, never have functioned. Gabinius was also responsible for changes in tax-collection in Judaea, essentially a move to direct taxation by the governor's officials, part of a wider project to reorganize the tax system in Syria: this aimed at the fair treatment of provincials, but was later condemned by the Roman *publicani* for hampering their activities (Cic., *Prov. Cons.* 9.10; *Pis.* 41; Jos., *AJ* 14.104, 203).

Gabinius's efforts to restore Ptolemy Auletes in Egypt (backed by Rome and with the assistance of Hyrcanus's government) provided, in his distance from Judaea, an opportunity for more rebel activities there: Alexander once more attempted revolt, massacring 'all Romans in the country' (Jos., *BJ* 1.176). After suppressing his forces, Gabinius 'reorganized the government in accordance with Antipater's wishes' (Jos., *BJ* 1.178): it is likely that the latter was also appointed *epimeletes* at this time, perhaps giving him overall responsibility for tax-collection.

The activities of some of Rome's most powerful figures would have a major impact on Judaeian affairs over the next two decades. The next governor of Syria, the triumvir and proconsul M. Licinius Crassus (54–53), anxious for military glory to rival that of his colleagues, equipped his disastrous expedition against Parthia by stripping the Jerusalem Temple of its wealth (Jos., *BJ* 1.179). This violation of the Temple's sanctity is likely to have fuelled further disturbances in Judaea in the following years. The revolt of Aristobulus's new-found ally Peitholaus was severely suppressed by the next governor of Syria, Cassius (53–51), called in by Antipater, and resulting in the decimation of the Galilean town of Tarichaeae and the enslavement of 30,000 of its men. This town would later prove one of the few Galilean centres of resistance to Rome during the First Revolt.

After the collapse of the first triumvirate (49 BCE), conflict between the surviving members, Julius Caesar and Pompey, dominated Judaeae politics as it dominated the interests of others in the East. Caesar's attempt to exploit Hasmonaean opposition against Pompey failed: both Aristobulus, sent with two legions against Pompey in Syria, and Alexander were killed on Pompey's orders. However, following the death of Pompey (48), Antipater and Hyrcanus offered their support to Caesar, playing a key role in his campaign in Egypt against the young Ptolemy. Caesar's rewards were considerable. Hyrcanus was confirmed in his office as high priest and ethnarch, and granted exemption from tax in the sabbatical year, permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and the restoration of some territory including Joppa and the Jezreel Valley taken away under Pompey. Relations with Rome were strengthened at a formal level: Hyrcanus received for himself and his children the title of *symmachos* (ally) of the Roman people, while Caesar's many decrees protecting the Jewish people included the guarantee of Jewish jurisdiction in Jewish affairs. Antipater received the title of *epitropos* (procurator) of Judaea, and, a rare privilege for a provincial at that time, Roman citizenship.

The rise of Herod

Josephus asserts that Antipater was the real ruler in this period, portraying Hyrcanus as too idle to play the part of king. Antipater's appointment of his sons, Phasael and Herod, to rule the tetrarchies of Jerusalem and Galilee respectively is also reported to have pleased many of the locals, and drawn the nation to treat him like a king. Indeed, the opposition among 'the leading Jews' accused the Antipatrids of taking on royal power. In particular, Herod's extermination of Galilean bandits caused tension with members of the Jerusalem elite, probably on the grounds that, in executing the bandits, he had superseded the powers of the ethnarch. As holder of the supreme power among the Judaeae elite Hyrcanus was able to summon Herod to answer charges.

As on this occasion, so throughout the period of Roman domination until 66, supreme power in internal Jewish affairs in Judaeae territory was maintained by the Jewish ruler of the time – ethnarch, king or high priest. On occasion, the ruler might call an assembly (*synedrion*), a picked assembly of associates and supporters, for consultative meetings or to try a particular case. These *synedria* were not, however, permanent institutions, but informally assembled from time to time on an *ad hoc* basis. Their members always included members of the upper priesthood and the 'powerful'; membership of a religious party such as the Pharisees was not, as some have thought, a determining factor for membership. In the trial of individuals, the *synedrion's* role seems to have been that of confirming the ruler's decision. Under Hyrcanus, Herod, his descendants, and perhaps the high priests of the provincial era, the power of trial and execution lay in the hands of the Jewish ruler of Judaea (Goodman 1987; McLaren 1991; Sanders 1992).

Nevertheless, the outcome of the showdown between Hyrcanus and Herod demonstrated Hyrcanus's weakness as Herod was let go under pressure from the governor of Syria, Sextus Caesar, an early sign of Rome's favour towards Herod, a point which was confirmed when his powers were extended yet further by Rome to include the

governorship of Coele Syria, covering a considerable area of the Palestinian region, and probably also Samaria.

In the period leading up to his appointment as king, Herod is pictured as a loyal servant of Rome and a great soldier, favoured by God and by no means without support from Jews. In Josephus's later work, the *Antiquities*, which is markedly more hostile to the king than the account in *Jewish War*, Herod is still portrayed overall as an impetuous and passionate, but on the whole reasonable, man: damning statements stand alongside records of his humanity and generosity to the end of his life. The hostility of our sources and of Josephus's personal position must be viewed alongside the relatively little evidence they supply for contemporary active opposition to his rule.

Herod's ability to win Roman approval was largely the key to his success. After Caesar's assassination (44 BCE), Herod's family transferred allegiance to his assassins, Cassius and Brutus, who had gone to the East where they tried to build up support against Caesar's party, led by Mark Antony. The Antipatrids' support of Cassius, based in Syria, won Herod the office of *strategos* of Coele-Syria, and the promise of the monarchy of Judaea. Fears over the complete demise of Hasmonaeian influence were behind the assassination of Antipater (43), but neither this nor subsequent attempts at rebellion against his sons proved effective. Indeed, the death of Antipater, in removing Hyrcanus's greatest ally, also destroyed 'the best surety for the continued existence of the Hasmonaeans' (Schalit 1975: 53). Cassius's favour towards the Antipatrids was clear in his support for Herod's destruction of his father's assassin.

The situation under Cassius was not easy for either Judaea or its neighbours whose finances were severely stretched by the Roman's need for funds for his military campaign, now facing the opposition of the newly formed Triumvirate of Mark Antony, Caesar's heir Octavian, and Lepidus. In the task of fund-raising, Herod proved an excellent servant.

However, following the triumvirs' victory at Philippi (42 BCE), the surviving Antipatrids backed those loyal to Caesar's cause, represented in the East by Mark Antony. Under his authority, Antipater's sons Phasael and Herod were appointed as tetrarchs with the administration of the whole of Judaea (and responsibility for funding Antony). In this, they were not without support among Jews, notably Hyrcanus, in need of a defender against the threat of his brother's surviving son, Antigonus. This role was, for the time being, taken on by Herod: his ability to repel Antigonus's invasion of Galilee was rewarded by the closest alliance with Hyrcanus, the promise of his daughter Mariamme in marriage. The problem of Antigonus was not yet over, however.

Herod's move from the office of tetrarch to that of monarch by 40 owed much to the Triumvirate's defence policy in the East and to Mark Antony in particular who, under the terms of the Treaty of Brundisium (40), retained charge of the East. Sometime before Philippi, Q. Labienus, a former general of Caesar, had been sent by Cassius to the Parthian court: resulting from this strange alliance of Roman republicanism and Parthia, Labienus invaded Asia Minor while Pacorus, son of the king of Parthia, took most of the Roman province of Syria, and supported against the Roman-backed rule of Herod and Phasael the claims of Antigonus, the last Hasmonaeian ruler, whom they installed in 40 as 'king and high priest' (Jos., *BJ* 1.274–375; *AJ* 14.370–491; Schürer 1973: 281–6; Smallwood 1976: 44–59).

Parthian custody ended the careers of Herod's closest allies in Jerusalem: Phasael was driven to suicide, while Hyrcanus II, Rome's approved high priest in Jerusalem, was taken prisoner by the Parthians and mutilated personally by Antigonus. Mutilation disqualified him permanently, following the traditions of the Torah, which insists on the physical integrity of the priesthood, from the office of the high priesthood.

Herod turned first to Nabataea for assistance. When this was not forthcoming, on account of political considerations towards Parthia, Herod fled to Rome. His mission there was ostensibly to secure the Judaeian throne for his future brother-in-law, Aristobulus III. That this was his original aim is not entirely unlikely: he must have been aware that Rome's usual policy was to back claimants from native royal families, not commoners like himself. However, this was not always the case, as the example of Herod shows: the triumvirs and the Senate declared him king of Judaea and Samaria, an appointment celebrated in the traditional way by ritual sacrifices to Jupiter, supreme god of the Roman Capitol.

Meanwhile, the *de facto* king of Judaea remained Antigonus. The Senate's appointment of Herod was of great advantage to them, in the face of the Parthian crisis, at a time when armed forces were stretched in the aftermath of Philippi. They also had reason to trust him in view of his father's friendship with Caesar and his loyal service to Roman powers in the East. No substantial military assistance, however, was given to Herod until 37 CE by which time he, with considerable support in Judaea, had accomplished much of the task of taking his kingdom by conquest. By 37, however, Antony's forces had driven the Parthians out of Syria. Sossius, governor of Syria, arrived to assist the conclusion of Herod's five-month siege of Jerusalem and the brief rule of Antigonus, abandoned by the Parthians and failing to win Roman support for his cause. Herod persuaded Sossius to remove his forces to prevent sacrilege, plunder and murder in Jerusalem, and Antony to dispose of Antigonus. Herod's conquest of his kingdom gave further legitimacy, in Roman eyes, to his right to the throne. His marriage to Mariamme the Hasmonaeian, during the course of the siege, gave support to that claim for his children by right of royal descent.

HEROD THE GREAT

Herod's successful maintenance of power over a long reign (37–4 BCE) stands in marked contrast to the civil unrest that marred the rule of the later Hasmonaeans, and the almost immediate breakdown of social control in Judaea after Herod's death, exacerbated by the failure of his son Archelaus, and the growth of Jewish objections to Roman or Roman-dominated rule.

Despite his evidence for some support for Herod among Jews, Josephus gives much space to underlining Herod's general lack of popularity in his kingdom. In characteristically deuteronomic fashion, his accounts of Herod frequently attack Herod as a 'bad' king, on account of alleged transgressions of Jewish law and association with idolatry. But at the heart of this approach is Hasmonaeian opposition: playing on Herod's origins as an Idumaeian, labelled as a 'half-Jew' by his rival Antigonus, arguing on these grounds that Herod's kingship violated Jewish custom. Certainly it was contrary to Hasmonaeian notions of right, and Hasmonaeian

ambitions proved a constant problem throughout his reign. However, opposition to Herod was relatively muted during his lifetime and minimal by comparison with the huge uprisings against the later Hasmonaeans.

Herod's relative success as king of Judaea was due to several factors. For security at home, a fundamental need was the creation of a ruling class not dominated by the Hasmonaeans (Stern 1976). While it is not clear that he destroyed the Hasmonaean aristocracy altogether, his court was constituted of imported advisers and officials or family members: loyalty was more probable, though not always forthcoming, from such quarters. In addition, the execution of prominent and wealthy Jews opposed to him ensured vital funds from the confiscation of their property.

Herod's recovery of Hyrcanus II from the hands of the Parthians was not entirely an altruistic act towards his father-in-law: while he remained their 'guest', he also remained a source of danger, as a potential Hasmonaean rival, to Herod's position. Nevertheless, Hyrcanus's days as high priest were over. Appointment to the crucial office of the high priesthood was filled by candidates from abroad, with no links to the Hasmonaeans. The exception to this rule was the brief interlude in which Herod was persuaded by his Hasmonaean mother-in-law to appoint her son, through the influence of Cleopatra on Antony, Aristobulus III, to this office. The popularity of this boy priest and his potential as a figurehead for pro-Hasmonaean discontent led to his early removal (35), reportedly by deliberate drowning under Herod's authority. Under Herod, the office of high priest was controlled by the king, with frequent changes of incumbent. By the first century CE, as a consequence of this policy, considerable rivalry existed within the high priestly families.

Decision-making in internal affairs was controlled by the king, as it had been in principle under Hyrcanus as ethnarch, who might act alone or in collaboration with others. On rare occasions, involving highly sensitive decisions such as the execution of respected teachers, Herod called on a public assembly to confirm his decision.

Less successful were Herod's attempts to absorb the Hasmonaean problem at a personal level by marriage to Mariamme, a union that incorporated a descendant of both Jannaeus's sons into his family. This did not prevent Mariamme's mother, Alexandra, from conspiring to increase Hasmonaean power against Herod, through intrigues with her royal neighbour in Egypt, Cleopatra. The coincidence of Hasmonaean ambitions to weaken Herod and the Egyptian queen's continuation of Ptolemaic designs on Judaea led Cleopatra to pressure her lover Mark Antony to give her a huge amount of territory governed by Herod, which he was obliged to lease back from her. In addition, her demands for Nabataean territory also made Herod responsible for collecting revenues due to her there and, in due course, for invading that territory when its king, Malichus I, defaulted on his payments (31 BCE).

The further story of Herod's dealings with the Hasmonaeans, exacerbated by the suspicions of other parts of his family, including the execution of Hyrcanus II, Mariamme, and Alexandra, all of whom were believed, with good reason, to be destabilizing forces, illustrates the continuing struggle for power centring on Hasmonaean claims throughout Herod's reign. Herod's plans to be succeeded by his Hasmonaean sons were abandoned on evidence suggesting their disloyalty to their father, eventually executed on Roman recommendation (7 BCE); similarly, his Idumaeen son Antipater who played a key role in destroying his half-brothers and in trying to

destroy his father (5 BCE). Of close family members, Herod's sister Salome seems to have remained the most constant in loyalty. Thus, Herod's removal of many of the old aristocracy who had emerged under the Hasmonaeans transformed the nature of the Jewish governing classes who would dominate in the following century (Stern 1982).

The policing of Herod's kingdom was undertaken very seriously and with good reason in view of the Hasmonaean revolts before 40 and the threat of territorial encroachment from external forces like Egypt and Parthia. Of Herod's many defensive structures, the most notable are a series of military forts including a fortified royal palace in Jerusalem, the reconstruction of the fortress Antonia, honouring Antony, to the north of the Temple, and the refortification of many others including Masada.

Herod was also careful to maintain a substantial and loyal army. He reinforced his rule at home, and his potential to assist Rome when called upon, with an army composed of mercenaries including both Jews and non-Jews from Judaea, but also soldiers from as far afield as Thrace, Germany and Gaul (Shatzman 1991). Their settlements increased the importance of non-Jews among the population of his kingdom (Stern 1975: 96). The Hasmonaeans would not have been able to expect loyalty from such a force.

Thirdly, and most importantly, Herod's power was derived from and sustained by the support he received from his Roman allies. In the struggles that developed among Caesar's party, Herod initially supported Mark Antony against Octavian. However, after Antony's defeat at Actium (31 BCE) Herod switched his support to Octavian, blocking the arrival of vital reinforcements for Mark Antony. Both Herod and Malichus I of Nabataea were fortunately absent from Actium itself, engaged in the struggle Cleopatra and Antony had determined for them. Herod now successfully offered his services to Octavian.

The victorious Octavian, soon to become Augustus, the supreme ruler of the Roman Empire, confirmed Herod's status at this time and granted him considerable extensions to his territory both now and later so that by his death the extent of his territory almost equalled that of the Hasmonaeans. From the Roman point of view, Herod was primarily valuable for his ability to keep Judaea at peace under overall Roman rule and so to control the region between Egypt and Syria.

As a 'friend and ally of the Roman people', Herod played an important role in other respects too. Like other client kings, he was responsible for supplying military aid when occasionally needed; providing revenues and personal gifts to the senior representatives of the Roman State; and cultivating Roman alliances at a personal level and by ostentatious displays of devotion to Rome. His powers within his own territory were supreme with the exception that critical decisions concerning the royal family of Judaea were subject to the emperor's consent. Actions outside his kingdom, on the other hand, could not be undertaken without Roman approval. Good relations were maintained with the governors of Syria in whose decisions, after 20 BCE, Herod was invited to take part (*AJ* 15.360; *BJ* 1.399). A temporary deterioration in his relations with Rome occurred only when Herod undertook a campaign, without the emperor's authority, outside his own kingdom, attacking hostile forces based in Nabataea, and thus exceeding his mandate as a client king.

As such, Herod represented the interests of the Roman State and the people of Judaea to one another. He also greatly increased the standing of Judaea in the Empire through the maintenance of Roman alliances and the influence that brought, through alliances with other local dynasties (Sullivan 1978), through benefactions to many of the cities of the Empire, and through his great display of power and wealth manifested in the unrivalled scale of his building programmes within Judaea and in many other parts of the Roman world. Within his own territory Herod was responsible for the refounding of Sebaste in honour of Augustus; the rebuilding of Caesarea as a city to rival Jerusalem, supplied with a world-class harbour to benefit Judaea's economy; and, most spectacularly, the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple as one of the greatest wonders of the contemporary world, drawing Jews and non-Jews alike to Jerusalem to express their devotion to God and to spend money there (Braund: 1984). The financing of such projects may have drawn on tax revenues, but there is no certainty that Herod imposed a severe tax burden in his kingdom. Much of his wealth was derived from other sources including inherited lands, the confiscated property of enemies, and benefits from Rome.

Thanks principally to Josephus, Herod's rule is frequently seen as that of an 'outsider', the first challenge to the established ruling class of Judaea since the Hasmonaeans themselves took power. Doubts about Herod's loyalty to Judaism are, however, misplaced. Undoubtedly he was very Hellenized, as his cultural endeavours and personal relationships show. But in this he was like many Jews of the Empire, and especially those of elite classes – a process that intensified during and beyond Herod's reign. Accusations that Herod altered or broke Jewish law are recorded with emphasis by Josephus. Most examples of this refer to aspects of Herod's Hellenization programme such as the theatre in Jerusalem (in which objectors failed to show signs of idolatry), and temple buildings for his non-Jewish subjects. Certainly, if Josephus is to be trusted, there were objections to such phenomena, but, in a time of great diversity over the interpretation of Jewish law, they should not be taken as representative of Jewish opinion, nor of Herod's deliberate flouting of the law. Such opposition as existed over these practices appears to have roused the active opposition of very few. Moreover, the very accusation that Herod broke Jewish law implies an acceptance of his identity as Jewish: such accusations could not be levelled at a non-Jew. Indeed, Josephus does not avoid representing Herod as a self-proclaimed Jew and attributes to him speeches exhorting others with piety. It is also Josephus who supplies evidence for Herod's own piety in many ways: the rebuilding of the Temple according to strict tradition; his maintenance of the prohibition of 'images of men' in the buildings of Jerusalem and on his coins; his serious undertaking of the Jewish duty of charity; his defence of Jews' legal right to observe their laws in the Empire; and his insistence on conversion for males marrying into his family. Significantly, Herod was remembered by non-Jews as the epitome of Jewishness.

The general view is that Herod was deeply unpopular with his subjects. This was undoubtedly true for pro-Hasmonaeans whose sentiments are preserved in Josephus and others. But we should not forget that hostility towards the Hasmonaeans themselves had been very deeply felt during their period of rule. It has also been suggested that Herod was regarded with hostility on religious grounds. The same had also been true, as the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls and Josephus reveal, of the Hasmonaeans.

Josephus records that some Pharisees influenced the Jewish population against Herod, on the grounds that he was a 'half-Jew' and a friend of the Romans. Josephus's desire to show the Pharisees as a destabilizing party under both Hasmonaeans and Herod must be taken into account here, and we should not read this as evidence for systematic rejection of Herod by religious groups (Mason 1991). He is, after all, reported as having received the friendship of some Pharisees. Some degree of religious hostility is suggested by incidents such as the incitement by two religious teachers to tear down the Roman eagle from Herod's Temple gate, an act that expresses primarily hostility towards Roman rule. Herod's lack of popularity is also suggested by the story that he is said to have ordered the execution of certain distinguished men on his death (4 BCE) so that there should be widespread mourning at the time of his funeral. But, we must remember, this comes mainly from Josephus who deeply regretted the end of the Hasmonaean dynasty that Herod's rule had brought. Accusations brought against Herod after his death were not, as Nicolas of Damascus pointed out in his defence, voiced during his lifetime.

HEROD ARCHELAUS

After Herod's death, the succession was decided in Rome by the emperor. In the interim, serious disturbances erupted in Judaea: revolutionary demands for the avenging of those killed for their protest over the Temple eagle and for a new high priest; provocations by the Roman procurator of finances, preying on the treasuries of Judaea; rival claims over the kingship aimed at promoting various Herodians or less conventional claimants, some with anti-Herodian and anti-Roman programmes. Roman reprisals were severe and a legion was installed to garrison Jerusalem. Protests against Herodian rule were also voiced in Rome by Jewish representatives with requests for the incorporation of Judaea into the province of Syria.

In the end, no king was appointed. Augustus appointed Archelaus as ethnarch of Judaea, Samaria and Idumaea with the cities of Strato's Tower and Sebaste, and the promise of monarchy should he prove capable. Greek cities such as Gaza and Gadara, however, were incorporated into the province of Syria. Other territories were divided among Herod's sister Salome and his surviving sons: to Antipas, Peraea and Galilee (deposed 39 CE); to Philip, Batanaea, Trachonitis, Auranitis and part of the domain of Zenodorus (d. 33 CE); to Salome, Jamnia, Azotus, Phasaelis and the palace at Ascalon, all in Archelaus's domain.

Archelaus, Herod's son by a Samaritan woman, remained ethnarch until 6 CE, a rule of ten years, which impressed neither the leaders among his subjects nor the authorities in Rome (Dio 55.27.6). Little is known about his rule and none of it is positive. Charges of cruelty and tyranny brought against him by the leading men of the Jews and Samaritans were accepted in Rome and he was exiled to Vienna in Gaul. Local protests against rulers were not unusual at this period: at around the same time, the deaths of the kings of Commagene and Philopator of Cilicia 'disturbed the peace of their countries, where the majority of men desired a Roman governor, and the minority a monarch' (Tac., *Ann.* 2.42). It is likely that Archelaus's removal was advantageous to Rome: the new revenues from his property and from the tribute imposed would prove useful as they did in other former kingdoms.

DIRECT ROMAN RULE

The territory of Archelaus was added to the province of Syria. From now on, except for the brief return of monarchy under Agrippa I (41–4 CE), this area would be ruled directly by Roman officials until the outbreak of revolt in 66 CE, which saw the temporary collapse of Roman rule in Judaea. For the administration of Judaea, Augustus appointed the legate of Syria, P. Sulpicius Quirinius, to undertake a census of property, the normal Roman method of ensuring efficient taxation of new territories in the Empire (in the whole province of Syria), and to sell the estates of Archelaus. This census is well known from the Gospel of Luke, which mistakenly assigns it to the reign of Herod the Great.

For reasons that remain unclear, the census in Judaea coincided with an uprising among some Jews. If the revolt was over the census, it was not a peculiarly Jewish objection: similar protests accompanied the imposition of the census in other regions (Goodman 1991). Josephus characterizes the Jewish protesters as members of a coherent movement, ‘the Fourth Philosophy’. But the fact that he can attribute them no real name – they are called the ‘Fourth Philosophy’ in relation to the three authentic and named philosophies of Judaism (Essenes, Pharisees and Sadducees) – and no clear definition of their principles, shows that the evidence is unclear. Whatever the nature of their objections, their aim, according to Josephus, was to achieve independence from Roman rule before it took proper effect. The quick suppression of this movement suggests that the rebels found little real support. But, in Josephus’s interpretation of history, this movement, in its antagonism towards foreign rule, represented a fatal innovation in the ancestral traditions that sowed the seed of the disaster to come sixty years later in the Jewish Revolt.

Jewish attitudes to Roman rule

In spite of long-cherished traditions, based on promises in Scripture that looked forward to freedom from foreign rule, there is little sign before 70 CE that most Jews objected to Roman rule as such. A few charismatic figures appear from time to time in first-century Judaea, advocating grand gestures of political defiance against Rome. But they did not prove at all effective. Banditry continued to be a problem but it is by no means clear that it was primarily motivated by opposition to Roman rule.

Among the Jewish elite about whose views we are, thanks to Josephus, best informed, there was positive enthusiasm for the arrival of Roman government. It was members of their class, after all, who had requested direct Roman rule in 6 CE, no doubt looking forward to relative freedom for themselves. Among other things, the demise of the monarchy freed them from involvement in the internecine conflicts of the Herodians, which had caused such unrest in recent years. Jews took many complaints to the Roman authorities in the years of direct rule in Judaea, yet their objections were not to Roman rule as such but to usually local Roman actions perceived to be hostile to the Jews politically or religiously. State protection of the Temple and of Jewish customs, established under Julius Caesar, remained in force under direct rule in so far as Jews appealed to Rome with confidence over infringements of these decrees, and senior Roman officials continued to punish such

infringements severely when asked to do so. Rome's goodwill towards the Jewish people was expressed through gifts to the Temple, and sacrifices offered in Jerusalem on behalf of the emperor and the Roman people were treated as the Jews' expression of devotion to their rulers. Nevertheless, the actions of several of the Roman governors of Judaea and their military forces put great strain on this relationship in their blatant disregard for Jewish religious sensibilities, especially where the Temple was concerned. Otherwise, religious ideology, in spite of Josephus's efforts to show the contrary, was not a major factor in the outbreak of revolt in 66 CE (though it undoubtedly helped to raise and to sustain support). When and where it appeared, Jewish resistance to Roman rule was not extraordinary in the context of the times: other regions like Judaea, on the edge of the Empire, and especially, as in 66, at times of Roman weakness, were also prone to sometimes long periods of rebellion (Goodman 1991).

Roman government

The government of pre-revolt Judaea was not, as Rome's appointment policy shows, regarded as one of the better jobs in provincial administration. In contrast to most provinces, to which members of the senatorial class were appointed, the governors of Judaea were drawn from the equestrian class or lower, the pattern of appointment for rebellious or newly acquired regions (Sherwin-White 1963: 6), and did not enjoy substantial military support within their territory. Governors were appointed and removed from office by the emperor, far distant from the province's affairs, and allowed relative freedom: only in exceptional cases did the senatorial legate of Syria, the nearest senior representative of Rome, interfere. The first governors were commissioned as prefects, suggesting their military functions. In practice, however, major military matters were left to the legate of Syria, while Judaea had a very small military presence made up of local auxiliaries, suggesting that Rome did not view this area as especially problematic. Based in Caesarea, Judaea's governors had three main responsibilities: policing; fiscal duties; and judicial government, with the power to impose the death penalty. The only laws limiting the governors' power with regard to provincial subjects guarded against extortion and perhaps also excessive cruelty on the governors' part (Sherwin-White 1963: 3). Even then, protests to the emperor could only be undertaken by the upper classes among the provincials.

Overall control in Judaea was held by Rome through military force. The supreme representative of the Jews for most of the pre-war provincial period was the high priest, appointed, with regular changes, by Roman governors or Herodian princes. Other decision-making, though probably not the power to impose the death penalty, was in the hands of the high priests and the powerful. If the high priest occasionally exceeded the formal limits of his power, for example by authorizing executions without Roman approval, the phenomenon was not without parallel in other relatively remote parts of the Empire (Sherwin-White 1963: 42). Thus, the leadership of Judaea enjoyed a large degree of independence from interference by Roman officials: 'Under Roman rule the Jewish community [of Judaea] maintained its identity and sense of independence in terms of administrative affairs' (McLaren 1991: 224). Most of the time, Roman governors sought to resolve problems by negotiation: only

in rare cases, and, tellingly under the governor under whom revolt broke out, did they seek to break down Jewish resistance by violence.

The main threats to the power of the high priest came from rival claims to this office. Most serious rivalries over leadership came from within the ruling elite just as the most serious threat to Herod's rule had been from within his family. Otherwise, the chief priests and the lay 'powerful' were apparently generally well supported by the rest of the Jewish community: there is, as one recent study puts it, 'no evidence of any long-standing tension between prominent Jews and the remainder of the community' (McLaren 1991: 224). That is not to ignore the various attempts by non-elite individuals or groups to get prominence throughout this period (e.g. Judas the Galilaean), but most failed to get much support.

No contemporary source has much good to say about the provincial governors of Judaea. Those who did well did so, according to Josephus, because they refrained from interfering with the customs of the country: of these, he mentions only two, Cuspius Fadus and Tiberius Julius Alexander. The failure of others to keep the peace was precisely linked to their ability to provoke Jews on religious grounds. Their failure in government, so Josephus, was a serious cause for the move towards revolt in 66.

Virtually nothing is known of the situation in Judaea for the first decade of direct Roman rule. Of Judaea under Tiberius (14–37), Tacitus informs us that 'all was quiet' (Tac., *Hist.* 5.9.2). For this period he merely reports complaints over the excessive burden of taxation in Syria and Judaea at the beginning of Tiberius's reign, but there is no suggestion that such complaints were made exclusively by Jews nor that they were accompanied by disturbances.

However, the impression of peace at this time is contradicted by evidence of the insensitive and sometimes savage rule of Pontius Pilate in Judaea (26–36) (for a more sympathetic portrait of Pilate, see Schwartz: 1992). The Gospels' image of Pilate as a thoughtful judge, sensitive to the wishes of Jews, is supported by no non-Christian source, and is a function of the Gospels' apologetic purpose to downplay conflict between Christianity and Rome. Both Philo and Josephus, however, stress Pilate's offences, unprecedented in Roman practice, against Jewish religious sensibilities in Jerusalem that provoked serious unrest there: the introduction of legionary standards in the city, and the use of sacred money to build an aqueduct, on which occasion protest was crushed with savage violence. Pilate's rule ended with his suspension from office to answer charges by Vitellius, governor of Syria, for responsibility in the massacre of Samaritans, allegedly refugees from Pilate's persecution of them. By Roman standards of provincial government, which prohibited extortion and cruelty, Pilate had failed.

The brief rule of Gaius Caligula (37–41) (Barrett 1989) marked Judaeian history in two important ways. First, by his patronage of M. Julius Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great by Aristobulus, and who had grown up at the imperial court in Rome. With the considerable resentment of other Herodians, the emperor awarded Agrippa the title of king and territories north of Judaea, previously in the hands of his uncles Philip and Antipas (the latter deposed after demanding kingship for himself). This was the beginning of Rome's last efforts to govern the East through client kings (Millar 1994: 56). However, Gaius's friendship with Agrippa does not

seem to have been accompanied by sympathy for Judaism. In retaliation for a Jewish attack on an imperial cult shrine in Jamnia, Gaius, inspired by a conviction of his own divinity, planned to convert the Jerusalem Temple into an imperial shrine with a colossal statue of himself as Jupiter in the Holy of Holies (Philo, *Leg.* 188.207–333; Jos., *AJ* 18.261–309; Tac., *Hist.* 5.9; Smallwood 1976 : 174–80; Barrett 1989: [ch. 12](#)). The situation was deemed so serious that the legate of Syria took over affairs in Judaea. Widespread opposition, voiced by elite Jews like Philo and Agrippa himself, and the cautious attitude of the legate of Syria, kept the project at bay until Gaius's assassination in 41.

AGRIPPA I

For his key role in ensuring Claudius's succession after Gaius (41), Agrippa was rewarded with the territories of Judaea and Samaria. In his brief but firm rule, this last king of Judaea asserted strong control over the ruling class and the military of Judaea, and suppressed dissident movements like Christianity (Acts 12.1–11). Agrippa's tendency to independent actions, however, raised some suspicion in Rome of revolutionary aspirations. His reputation for piety and defence of Judaism was marred by behaviour reminiscent of his patron Gaius when, in the theatre at Caesarea, he failed to reject the flattery of those who hailed him as a god (Jos., *AJ* 19.343–6; Acts 12.19–23). He died soon afterwards, apparently repenting of this impiety, and much mourned by his Jewish subjects.

No more Herodians would rule Judaea. But Herodian influence continued in Jerusalem with their power over the administration of the high priest: only the last high priest, appointed by the rebels, was not a royal appointee. The kingdom of Agrippa was split up on his death (44), and the territories of Galilee, Peraea, Judaea, Samaritis and Idumaea were brought together as the province of Judaea under equestrian governors with the title 'procurator'. Agrippa's son, Agrippa II, reckoned too young to rule at this time, was later awarded various lands to the north of Judaea and, eventually, the right to control the administration of the Temple.

The first procurators of Judaea exercised extreme vigilance over potential subversion. Cuspius Fadus (?44–6), perhaps suspecting subversive activities among the Jerusalem elite, came into conflict with them over the guardianship of the high priest's vestments, a powerful symbol of their authority. The situation was later resolved by giving control of Temple affairs to Herod of Chalcis, brother of the late Agrippa I. Other disturbances in this period were severely suppressed: a border conflict between Jews of Peraea and the city of Philadelphia, and the activities of Theudas who promoted himself as a leader in the style of Moses with the professed ability to make the waters of the Jordan part.

In contrast with that time is the breakdown of order under the later procurators, attributable in part to the continuing presence of locally recruited auxiliaries hostile to Judaism. Ventidius Cumanus (48–52) proved a damaging failure for all concerned due to his failure or unwillingness to control forces hostile to the Jews of his province: individual soldiers were responsible for grave provocations, and his mishandling of bloody Samaritan–Jewish conflicts led to the intervention of the legate of Syria and Cumanus's removal and punishment by Claudius who decided in favour of the Jews.

The last procurators of Judaea were all appointments of Nero (54–68) under whom provincial maladministration was notoriously widespread and its results visible in unrest not only in Judaea but also in places like Britain, Gaul, Africa, Egypt and Greece. The first of these, Antonius Felix (?52–?60), was of low social origins, but, in spite of the sneers of Josephus and Tacitus, very well connected at Rome and Jerusalem. His period of rule is characterized by disorder, possibly intensified by Rome's preoccupation with Armenia and Parthia (Millar 1994: 68–9). Banditry in Judaea, and popular independence protests, were constant problems: Felix's policy of severe repression did not bring peace and such activities continued to 66. In Jerusalem, on the other hand, apparently no restraint was imposed, resulting in a wave of political assassinations by the so-called *sikarii* (dagger-men) (Jos., *BJ* 2.254–7), hired by Jews and Romans alike, and gang-warfare between members of the ruling class.

The governor exercised relatively moderate intervention after riots between Jews and Syrians over the question of citizenship in Caesarea, each side claiming it for themselves. The issue was decided in favour of the non-Jews: in 60, Nero cancelled Jewish citizen rights there, a move that, in Josephus's view, proved critical in the outbreak of war (Jos., *AJ* 20.184).

Subversive activities among the Jerusalem ruling class increased in the last years before the war. The brief absence of a governor, through the death in office of Porcius Festus, was exploited by the high priest Ananus, son of the Ananus who had deliberately contravened Roman authority by executing some Christians (Jos., *AJ* 20.200). This relatively small sign of independent intentions brought the younger Ananus's immediate removal by the next representative of Rome, Luceius Albinus.

Despite evidence for considerable efficiency on Albinus's part, his years in Judaea saw an intensification of struggles for personal power among prominent members of the Jewish ruling class including Ananias, other high priests, and members of the Herodian family (Jos., *AJ* 20.205–7, 213–14). The clear involvement of members of the ruling class in the revolt, characterized by internal power struggles, and less than ten years away, is not surprising against this background.

Gessius Florus, the last Neronian procurator of Judaea, stands condemned by both Josephus and Tacitus for pushing the Jews into war against Rome. As Josephus puts it, 'we preferred to perish together rather than by degrees' (Jos., *AJ* 20.257; cf. Tac., *Hist.* 5.10.1). While Florus's appointment had been secured through the influence of Poppaea, friendly to Josephus and other Jews, his actions showed great contempt for the Jewish subjects of his province. His prime motivation (like that of many of Nero's provincial governors) was self-enrichment, achieved allegedly through widespread plunder of communities either by himself or by brigands charged with providing the governor with 'his quota of the spoils' (Jos., *AJ* 20.255). These activities caused many in the province, and especially the wealthy, to go abroad. In Josephus's earlier account, which provides the only specific details about Florus's activities, he claims that the governor deliberately provoked the Jewish revolt in order to cover up his own crimes from his superiors (Jos., *BJ* 2.282–3).

Events in the first six months of 66 proved critical for the breakdown in order in the province and especially for the extreme souring of relations between the governor and members of the Judean ruling class. First, Florus failed the Jews, and especially the 'leading Jews', of Caesarea. Despite having taken bribes from the 'Jewish

notables of Caesarea' to protect their synagogue from the hostile activities of their non-Jewish neighbours, Florus did nothing to help them. His sympathies, no doubt shaped by his own background as a native of a Greek city himself, were with the Greeks of Caesarea. Florus's hostility towards the Jews went further, however, than doing nothing: when the Jews of Caesarea fled the city and brought their protest before Florus, he responded by arresting the delegation of leading men on the charge of having removed a Torah scroll from Caesarea. It is not difficult to see why Florus's action was seen as deeply provocative, and as signalling the governor's complete lack of sympathy with the leading Jews of his province.

Even greater outrage was provoked by Florus's seizure of funds from the Jerusalem Temple, allegedly to make good some aspect of the imperial finances. This was probably overdue tribute, given the size of the sum, but nevertheless perceived as sacrilegious because money devoted to the service of God was being put instead to the service of the emperor (Jos., *BJ* 2.282–3). This proved the critical point for widespread Jewish disaffection with the governor, though not yet for revolt. One group mocked what they took to be his greed by collecting coppers in the street for him, as if for a beggar. When the Jerusalem authorities failed to hand over the culprits, Florus took revenge on an uncooperative ruling class. His troops sacked the upper city with much slaughter, and many of the 'peaceable citizens', some of them of equestrian rank, were treated like brigands, scourged and crucified (Jos., *BJ* 2.301–14; Goodman 1987: 170–2).

One further provocation elicited the first rebel action. Florus's troops, on his instruction, ignored the salute of the Jerusalem populace. On this occasion, some Jews took action to prevent the capture of the Temple by destroying its porticoes. It was clear by now that revolt was in the air. At the request of Jerusalem priests, a cohort was left behind in the city to keep the peace. Florus, meanwhile, filed a report to Cestius Gallus, legate of Syria, accusing the Jews of revolt.

At this stage, Josephus's record suggests, revolt might have been avoided had Florus been seen to be dealt with justly. However, nothing materialized of the protests made to Gallus by leading members of Jerusalem society, including Berenice, nor of the legate's promises to investigate the matter (Jos., *BJ* 2.280–1). King Agrippa's failure to have Florus removed, and his advice that the governor should be appeased for the meantime, led to his expulsion from the city.

THE FIRST JEWISH REVOLT

Rebel action against Rome began on two fronts. Unidentified rebels, perhaps members of the ruling class (McLaren 1998: 283), took Masada and wiped out its Roman garrison, thus acquiring substantial weaponry (Jos., *BJ* 2.408). This Herodian fort was the first of the rebels' prizes, and the only place to stay in rebel hands for the duration of the revolt. Meanwhile in Jerusalem, Eleazar, son of the high priest Ananias and captain of the Temple, called on the Temple priests to reject any gift or sacrifice from a foreigner (Jos., *BJ* 2.409–10). In Josephus's view, this laid the foundations for war: what Eleazar demanded, and got, was the rejection of sacrifices on behalf of the emperor and the people of Rome; it was a strong signal of hostility by members of the Jewish elite towards the centre of power in Rome.

In Jerusalem those leading citizens, including the high priest Ananias, who, according to Josephus, were urging peace, resorted to calling in the pro-Roman forces of Agrippa. The results, from their point of view, were catastrophic: targeting both Romans and pro-Roman Jews, the rebels destroyed the properties of Ananias, Agrippa and Berenice, expelling or recruiting Agrippa's army, and massacring the small Roman force remaining in the city. The destruction of the debt archive at this time was a symbolic strike against the money-lending rich, but also a calculated spur to win the poor over to the rebel cause.

The rebels had been joined in their actions by Menahem, a descendant of Judas the Galilean, now equipped with forces and arms from Masada. He took the leading role in attacking the Roman forces and their Jewish supporters: his purge of pro-Roman Jews took the lives of Eleazar's father and uncle, Ananias and his brother. The radical coalition of Menahem and Eleazar rapidly dissolved, however. Eleazar's determination to protect his leading role in the revolt led quickly to the assassination of Menahem and many of his followers. The survivors among this group fled to Masada and would play no further part in the war in Jerusalem.

Josephus claims that the trigger for much wider disturbances, at this time, was the rebels' Sabbath-day massacre of the surrendered Roman forces in Jerusalem, holed up in the royal towers. In his interpretation this sinful action received immediate punishment at the hands of Providence (*pronoia*): the entire Jewish population of Caesarea was massacred by other citizens. This proved the catalyst for many more ferocious conflicts initiated by Jews and gentiles on each other. The pattern of mutual hostility was not entirely uniform: in some places gentiles gave strong protection to their Jewish neighbours; and, in others, notably the Greek cities of the Decapolis, Jews gave their lives in loyalty to their local city, fighting against the Jewish rebels. Life for such Jews was precarious, as Josephus's tragic story of the Jews of Scythopolis shows very clearly: there, Jews who had fought Jewish rebels were nevertheless massacred by their non-Jewish Scythopolitan allies (Jos., *BJ* 2.466–76; Goodman 1992b: 53). Disorder in this region also intensified the long-running tensions between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria, resulting in the massacre of huge numbers of Jews there at the order of Philo's nephew, Tiberius Julius Alexander. One major outcome of these conflicts was, among the survivors, a supply of Jews to join the rebel cause.

Roman reaction to these events was slow and ineffectual. Cestius Gallus, governor of Syria since 65 and consul of more than twenty years before, did not approach Jerusalem until October 66. Realizing the need for better preparations, he withdrew his forces, only to be pursued by the rebels, who killed 6,000 of his soldiers near Beth Horon (Jos., *BJ* 2.499–555). The rebels' achievement was extraordinary by the standards of the time: as Fergus Millar puts it, 'There is no other example of a comparable defeat of Roman regular forces by the population of an established province' (Millar 1994: 71).

The rebel regime

Jerusalem remained under rebel control until 70. A provisional government emerged in 66, lasting over a year, and headed by Joseph son of Gorion and Ananus the ex-high priest. Military leaders were appointed to conduct the war in other areas from

Idumaea to Galilee: among these were sons of the chief priests and Josephus, also of the priestly aristocracy, who was given the charge of Galilee (Jos., *BJ* 2.562–8).

The pattern of elite leadership continued throughout the revolt: many members of the ruling class did not leave Jerusalem for the duration of the war; leading citizens made up the Zealots' criminal court; while individual rebel leaders and many of their supporters were aristocrats. Individual aristocrats' struggle for greater power became clear in the years leading up to revolt, while in 66 Florus's actions in Caesarea and Jerusalem signalled manifest contempt for their class, and loss of faith on both sides. For an aristocracy that had relied on Roman support that now appeared to have been withdrawn, the prospect of independent power, built on a national revolt, must have seemed the best chance of survival (Goodman 1987).

Because of Josephus's role in Galilee we are best informed for this early period about the situation there. Galilee presented a difficult task for the rebels, being the area most vulnerable to attack from Roman forces in Syria. But defence was not made easy by the fact that many Jews of the most important cities (Tiberias, Sepphoris, Gabara) were ambivalent about or opposed to the war. Josephus's personal task was also made difficult by the rivalry of John of Gischala who, with some backing from Jerusalem, sought the rebel leadership for himself and to obstruct Josephus.

Minting of rebel coinage, for sacred and ordinary purposes, began at the beginning of the revolt and continued until 70 (Meshorer 1982). This is not mentioned by Josephus, but is attested in large quantities in Judaea, Galilee and Samaria. It is not clear who was responsible for this, but the priests' access to the Temple treasuries indicates that responsibility lay in their circles. The issue of silver coins, in particular, a right denied to provinces, signalled the claim to independence not just from Rome but from the Tyrian mint, which had previously supplied silver coins for the Temple. Rebel symbols represent the land and the Temple. Slogans proclaim no particular leadership, but recall in different ways the glorious past of the country when free from foreign rule: Palaeo-Hebrew script represents the standard for coins of the autonomous Hasmonaean era; proclamation of the 'freedom of Zion' recalls the ancient name of Jerusalem; the 'shekel of Israel', the currency and the name of the land belonging to a distant past. The rebels represented a new future based on the past in which the name of Judaea, associated with previous regimes, did not figure (Goodblatt 1998). The coins also proclaim independence in the traditional Hellenistic manner by proclaiming a new era, lasting to year 5 (70).

In early 67, from his base in Greece, Nero made two new appointments to the region: C. Licinius Mucianus to replace Gallus, who had died the previous winter, and, to suppress the Jewish revolt, 57-year old Flavius Vespasianus, a trusted man from Nero's circle in Greece, and a first-generation senator with military distinctions in a now rather distant past (Rudich 1993: 194).

With his son Titus as second-in-command, Vespasian was given forces of around 60,000 including three legions (around twice the size of Gallus's forces). The repression of Galilee, begun in June 67, was quick and ruthless. Very few places offered resistance: in Jotapata, Josephus was one of just two males to survive, captured after a 47-day siege; other rebel centres in Galilee and in Agrippa's territory of Gaulanitis were crushed. Vespasian's successes of 67 were completed with a brief visit to Judaea, taking Jamnia and Azotus, and installing garrisons there. Action was resumed in

early 68, and by June only Jerusalem and the forts of Herodion, Machaerus and Masada remained untouched. Nero's suicide (June 9) ended Vespasian's mandate in Judaea, and he halted his actions in Judaea, pending Rome's advice, until the following year. For most of that year, Vespasian waited, watching from a distance in Alexandria, the bloody struggles over the succession to Nero. Apart from a brief intervention in June 69 to suppress Simon's forces in south Judaea, he waited until spring 70 to begin finishing off the revolt.

In the meantime, the Roman political scene changed dramatically. Vespasian's own bid for the position of emperor was declared in July 69 (Jos., *BJ* 4.592–620; Tac., *Hist.* 2.79–80; *P. Fouad* 8 = *CPJ* 418a), supported by the legate of Syria, Mucianus, and the prefect of Egypt, Tiberius Julius Alexander. At this point, the former rebel general Josephus was released as a reward for his now fulfilled prophecy of Vespasian's rise (Jos., *BJ* 3.399–408). This move eventually brought Josephus into the close circle of Vespasian, and thus into the position from which he could begin his career as apologetic historian. In December 69, Vespasian was acknowledged as emperor by the Senate.

New factions in Jerusalem

Vespasian's successes in 67 had a major impact in Jerusalem. Loss of faith in the leadership of Ananus fuelled the rise of the Zealots, a self-designation apparently denoting their religious zeal, in 68 (Jos., *BJ* 4.160–1): led by Ananus's rival, the priest Eleazar son of Simon, its membership was composed of upper-class priests and refugees from Vespasian's victories. The Zealots asserted their control over the Temple with the election of a new high priest: Phanni son of Samuel, an unknown from an unknown village and, according to Jewish tradition (Jos., *BJ* 4.138–57, 160; *t. Yoma* 1.6), not of high-priestly descent. Joined by John of Gischala, a refugee since 67 from the suppression of his home town, and a force of Idumaeans, the Zealots also took control of Jerusalem, destroying the previous leadership with the murder of Ananus. In Josephus's view, this murder sealed the fate of the city, since Ananus alone represented the possibility of a compromise solution with Rome (Jos., *BJ* 4.318).

Some of those who had fled the Zealot takeover joined forces with Simon bar Gioras, a former rebel general in Acrabatene: in spring 69, having gained an army of refugees from the Zealot cause, Simon took control of the whole city, except for the Temple, and remained in charge to the moment of defeat. After the fall of Jerusalem it was he who was recognized by Rome as the leader of the enemy.

From then until their brief unity at the beginning of the Roman siege of the city, the rebels were divided. A new party led by Eleazar son of Simon with men of 'weight' and 'distinction' (Jos., *BJ* 5.5–7), many of them Zealots, split from John and occupied the Temple. John and some of the Idumaeans took the outer precincts, while Simon, with much the greatest support, held the rest of the city. All the factions warred with each other and the rest of the Jerusalem population. John eventually took the inner court at Passover: two factions became one with the murder of Eleazar. Only when the battering-rams arrived at Jerusalem did John agree to recognize Simon's leadership.

Famine was assured, once the siege was underway, since the factions had burned the storehouses for provisions: 'all the environs of the Temple were reduced to ashes' (Jos., *BJ* 5.25). Josephus paints a dire picture of life, reminiscent of the horrors accompanying the curses at the end of Deuteronomy, in the city in this period: his interpretation of these events as divine punishment for impiety is emphasized again and again. Roman writers shared another of Josephus's much stressed perceptions, that the rebels' own divisions defeated them. Nevertheless (as in other terrors), he provides evidence for a considerable degree of organization of the city's life under some kind of council. The rebels continued to maintain the daily sacrifice until July 70 (Jos., *BJ* 6.94; *m. Taanit* 4.6), and, though with severe risk to the visitor, the Temple as a place of pilgrimage (Jos., *BJ* 5.18). Further signs of organization appear in the continued issue of coinage until the fall of Jerusalem, the burial of the dead, and the assembly of courts by the Zealots to assert their power (which they certainly did when the verdict went against them (see Jos., *BJ* 4.334–44; Goodman 1987: 178–9).

From 68 onwards the rebels might reasonably have had 'great expectations': other revolts (especially at the borders of Empire), had succeeded, and the leadership of Rome was in chaos. What they did not anticipate was the marvellous opportunity their suppression offered to a newly elected emperor in need of a victory.

The Roman reconquest of Jerusalem was undertaken by Titus in March 70, appointed by his father Vespasian to take over the war. Supported by massive forces of four legions (against an estimated rebel force of 24,000), with assistance from forces including Agrippa II and Tiberius Julius Alexander, the Roman forces took the city after a brief siege culminating in the destruction of the Temple in late August and the suppression of the rebel forces.

According to Josephus, anxious to defend the reputation of Titus to Jews and Romans alike, the Temple was burned against Titus's express orders (itself improbable; cf. Smallwood 1976: 325) that it should be spared. There are good reasons, however, to believe the opposite: the propaganda of the victors, which gloats over the destruction, and Roman sources, which make clear that the destruction was deliberate. While there are no signs before 70 that the Romans found the cult objectionable, its use as a rebel fortress in the war, and perhaps its long-standing role as a focus for protest, decided its fate.

The date of the Second Temple's destruction was remembered as coinciding with that of the first under the Babylonians (10 Ab: Jos., *BJ* 6.250; 9 Ab: *m. Taanit* 4.6). Within a month, on Titus's orders, the city was virtually razed to the ground. Only the Herodian towers and part of the city's western wall, where future Jewish pilgrims would lament the Temple's loss, were spared. The devastation would lead visitors, so Josephus, to suppose Jerusalem had never been inhabited (Jos., *BJ* 7.3). For the time being, the city served mainly as the headquarters of the Legion X Fretensis.

Jewish losses were enormous. Many had lost their lives already in the famine, or at the hands of the rebels or, captured by the Romans, had been crucified outside the city to terrorize the rebels into submission (Jos., *BJ* 5.420ff.). The remains of burnt houses in Jerusalem (the only remains to be associated with this period of destruction) testify to the devastation of the period (Avigad 1984: 123). Survivors not freed by Titus faced enslavement or, for proven rebels, and the old and the ill,

execution (Jos., *BJ* 6.414–20). Many Jewish prisoners were later killed in Titus's celebratory games held in Caesarea Philippi, Berytus and the cities of Syria (Jos., *BJ* 7.23–4, 37–9, 96).

In hindsight, seeking to explain the catastrophe of the revolt, Josephus pointed to many causes. He is undoubtedly right that Roman maladministration, especially under Nero, and especially with regard to offences against the Temple, was a major factor. His attempt to identify the chief rebels with marginal groups – rural bandits, urban assassins and deluded ideologues – is less convincing. Josephus's own evidence does not show that any of these groups aimed at the active destruction of Roman rule in Judaea. The *sikarii*, on whom Josephus blamed the beginning of war (Jos., *BJ* 7.253–8, 262), operated, by his own admission, as assassins for Jew and Roman alike, and took no real part in the war itself. Menahem, with whom, like the *sikarii*, Josephus links the Fourth Philosophy, does not emerge as a rebel leader until after the outbreak of revolt and, even then, is quickly suppressed by elite rebel forces. Antagonism from the local non-Jewish elements in the governors' armies and, much more so, the bloody hostilities between Jews and non-Jews in Greek cities in 66 undoubtedly fired the mood for revolt. So perhaps did the widespread poverty and unemployment of the province. However, while, in the economic conditions of first-century Judaea, there was much reason to expect hostility to the regime to come from the poor (Goodman 1982; 1996: 758–61), there is little evidence that the inspiration for revolt came from such quarters. Their contribution to the revolt seems largely to have been as hirelings in the armies of the Jewish aristocrats who led the revolt. Despite Josephus's efforts to place the blame elsewhere, he provided strong testimony to the ambition for power among the Judaeans elite as a decisive factor in promoting war against Rome (Goodman 1987; Price 1992; cf. Brunt 1977).

Exploitation of victory

Suppression of the Judaeans revolt was exploited by Vespasian and his sons, keen to show off their central role in defending Rome from disorder at home and in the provinces. Accordingly, in 71, they celebrated a triumph in common (Jos., *BJ* 7.121–57), to display the treasures of the peoples they had crushed into submission. Josephus naturally gives special prominence to the display of conquered Judaea and especially to the captured treasures of the Jerusalem Temple. The climax of the procession, following Roman practice, saw the execution of the enemy's general, Simon bar Gioras (Jos., *BJ* 7.148–54). Triumphal arches and a new temple for the goddess Pax, in which were housed the Temple's treasures, provided more permanent commemorations of the victory in Rome. From 71, and sporadically until 81, vast quantities of special coins were issued to commemorate the capture and humiliation of Judaea. Such propaganda, like the triumph, was unprecedented after the suppression of a revolt: the 'Judaea Capta' coins provided important reminders of the Flavians' greatest victory while no doubt also designed to deter further revolt (Smallwood 1976: 330). Some tact was shown in the coins issued for the province, which display markedly less insulting images of Jews than those issued in Rome (Meshorer 1982: 194).

Very few details survive concerning the taxation of the province after 70, though

evidence for tax exemptions in the 80s suggests early signs of economic recovery. As a direct result of the war, however, a new annual tax of two drachmas (the *didrachmon*) was imposed from 70 onwards on all Jews of the Empire who 'followed their ancestral customs' (Dio 66.7.2). The financial burden of this tax was not slight, but the 'psychological burden' is likely to have been more significant: the tax not only associated all Jews, regardless of their involvement in the war, with a failed rebellion, but its use in the restoration of the temple of Capitoline Jupiter made them pay for the practice of their religion by supporting the cult of the victor's chief deity (Jos., *BJ* 7.218). One important consequence of the new tax was the development of an official Roman definition of Jewish identity as conferred by practice of Jewish customs rather than by ancestry (Goodman 1989).

For all their propaganda against the rebels, the Flavians' good relations with some of the Jewish aristocracy continued after 70. However, literary evidence from elite Roman writers like Tacitus and Juvenal suggests a markedly more contemptuous mood towards Judaism than is evident in earlier Roman writers, stressing the un-Roman qualities of Judaism (Tac., *Hist.* 5.2–5; Juv., *Satires* 14.96–106). To counter this mood, and to persuade those who mattered in Roman society that Judaism was indeed compatible with Roman values, was the enterprise with which Josephus was to engage himself for the rest of his life. Other Jewish writings post 70 CE, however, illustrate the development of a much more ambivalent, often very hostile, mood towards Rome that was not present in earlier Jewish culture.

Suppression of further resistance

After the fall of Jerusalem, rebels still held out in Herodian forts and in caves near the Dead Sea. Josephus reports that the surrender of the forts of Herodion and Machaerus was quickly achieved by the legate Lucilius Bassus, second governor of the new administration (71–3), wiping out surviving rebel refugees from Jerusalem and Machaerus at the 'forest called Jarden' (Jos., *BJ* 7.163–215).

By the time of Bassus's death in office in 73, only Masada remained as a rebel stronghold. The reduction of this fortress, housing around 1,000 rebels, was rigorously undertaken by the new legate, L. Flavius Silva. What actually happened at Masada is not known for sure (Jos., *BJ* 7.304–401; Yadin 1966; Feldman 1975; Ladouceur 1987). Josephus's famous account of the rebels' last days makes for exciting reading but some aspects of its reliability are far from certain. In particular, his story of the rebels' mass suicide is hard to sustain, for lack of material evidence: while it is plausible that the rebels, like other Jews in the war, had indeed committed suicide, it is quite possible that Josephus's story is a cover-up for a Roman massacre, while also lending some dignity to the final exit of the Judaeans rebels. The primary purpose of the story, as it stands in Josephus, is to make these rebels, with their ideological links to the Fourth Philosophy, accept responsibility for the war and admit defeat: the rebel leader, Eleazar ben Yair, is made to acknowledge, through the words of Josephus, that God now stands on the side of Rome (Jos., *BJ* 7.360). Resistance within Judaea was, for the time being, over: a garrison was installed at Masada; and determined rebels made new homes in Egypt and Cyrene, where they and their descendants may well have contributed to the Jewish revolts there under Trajan.

Settlement of Judaea

Very little is known about Judaea in the early years after the fall of Masada. We do know that a new Roman order was established in the province: in place of low-ranking procurators and meagre military resources, government was entrusted to an imperial legate of praetorian rank, assisted by a procurator in charge of finance, and with the military force of a legion (X Fretensis) stationed in Jerusalem, reckoned the likely trouble spot for the future as it had been in the past. Auxiliary units composed of local gentiles, who had caused much friction with local Jews in recent years, were posted well away from the province.

After 70, Vespasian disposed of territory confiscated from rebel landowners (Jos., *BJ* 7.216; Isaac 1984): there is no reason to exclude the possibility that other Jews bought this land. Indeed, it is clear that Jews continued to own land in Judaea after the revolt. Within Judaea, Emmaus was renamed Nicopolis in honour of Vespasian's victory, and land there was used to settle 800 veterans from the war, a useful supplement to defences around Jerusalem (Jos., *BJ* 7.217). Otherwise, Vespasian founded a new city, Flavia Neapolis, in Samaria, with predominantly non-Jewish settlers. To accompany the introduction of the legion to the province, Caesarea was promoted to the status of a colony with exemption from *tributum capitis*.

Josephus's efforts to promote the upper-priestly class and Agrippa II in his *Jewish War* suggest that, at first, enough of this class survived to make a plausible bid for power; but, if so, he no longer reckoned their chances by the time of his *Antiquities* (Schwartz 1990). There, like other Jews writing in the aftermath of the war, and following in the fundamental tradition of Judaism, he advocates the life lived according to the words of Moses: he does not, however, indicate any particular authority to mediate those words.

There were undoubtedly many groups at this period seeking to fill the authority vacuum that the crushing of the priestly leadership and its cultic centre had left. The best known of these are those figures, from a variety of backgrounds, whose traditions are collected in the earliest rabbinic literature (Strack and Stemberger 1991; Neusner 1994). This reflects, among other things, the early rabbis' attempts to gain an authoritative position among Jews, initially in Judaea, and later in Galilee (Goodman 1983). However, the evidence of their own writings, depicting conflicts with other Jews, together with other literary and archaeological evidence, shows that the rabbis were not to play a leading role in Jewish society before at least the third century. On the other hand, it is clear from inscriptional evidence that members of priestly families continued to consider, long after 70, the great importance of their status (Williams 1999).

While literary evidence makes clear that, from very early on after its destruction, Jews expected the eventual restoration of the Temple cult (4 *Ezra*; 2 *Baruch*), and some, in that expectation, wrote about it as though it still existed (Jos., *Ap.* 2.193–8), neither the cult nor its high priesthood were in fact restored after 70 (Guttmann 1967). The economic, political and religious significance of Jerusalem was severely diminished as a consequence.

TO THE SECOND JEWISH REVOLT

At the end of Trajan's reign (115–17), Jewish revolts erupted in various parts of the eastern Empire: Cyrene, Egypt, Cyprus and Mesopotamia (Dio 68.32.1–3; Euseb., *Hist.* 4.2; Appian, *Frg.* 19; *Civil Wars* 2.90; *SHA, Hadrian* 5.8). Conducted with ferocity and crushed with huge Jewish losses, no ancient writer could find an explanation for these rebellions, though resentment at the destruction of the Temple and the imposition of the *didrachmon* for Jupiter's temple may well lie behind widespread Jewish attacks on gentile cult centres in Cyrene and Egypt (Goodman 1992a). These revolts do not seem to have been accompanied by comparable disturbances in Judaea where there are no clear signs of disturbance prior to 132 (though cf. Horbury 1996).

In the aftermath of Trajan's Parthian war (113–17) and Jewish revolts in neighbouring countries (115–17), however, Rome's military presence in Judaea was substantially reinforced, no doubt in anticipation of potential problems there. Under the rule of Hadrian, Trajan's successor, Rome's interests in Judaea were protected by a governor of consular rank and by two legions (Lifshitz 1960; Isaac and Roll 1979a, 1979b).

Like the rest of the region, Judaea experienced the impact of Hadrian's programme of promoting the Hellenization of the East (Birley 1997). The most enduring evidence of this in Judaea is connected with the emperor's visit to the province in 130: new roads and buildings were constructed, and the visit was commemorated with the 'conventional expressions of honour' found in other provinces including the building of Hadrianea at Caesarea and Tiberias, and coins celebrating the *adventus* of the emperor to Judaea.

The foundation of cities and colonies was part of Hadrian's policy of restoration and promotion of Hellenism in the East. The refounding of Jerusalem as the *colonia* Aelia Capitolina, honouring Hadrian's family as well as the gods of the Capitoline, was probably intended to commemorate Hadrian's visit (Bowersock 1980: 134). (Around this time, nearby Sepphoris, with a largely Jewish population, was also renamed in honour of the emperor and his supreme God as Diocaesarea.) No doubt the introduction of a second *colonia* in Judaea also served other practical needs: the second legion, now in Judaea for at least ten years, required a local supply of citizen recruits (Isaac and Roll 1979a: 66; Birley 1997: 233).

Paucity of evidence makes it very difficult to gauge reaction in Judaea to this event. If, as seems likely, the new *colonia* was founded in 130, there is no sign of immediate protest over this move, nor at other aspects of Hadrian's programme of Hellenization through building in Judaea and other areas with Jewish populations (Bowersock 1980: 134). Indeed, Hadrian's special honouring of Jerusalem may well have been regarded positively by some Jews at this stage (Schäfer 1990).

THE SECOND JEWISH REVOLT

Nothing in the sources prepares us for the outbreak of a well-organized revolt in Judaea, probably confined only to Jews, lasting from 132–5 CE, and remembered as one of the chief disasters of Hadrian's reign (sources in Dio 69.12.1–15; Euseb. *Dem.*

6.18.10; *Hist.* 4.5.2; 5.12.1; Fronto, *Parthian War* 2). The causes of this revolt seem not to have been well understood in antiquity. The fullest account of the revolt, derived from Xiphilinus's epitome of Dio, gives the foundation of Aelia and the construction there, in place of 'the temple of the god' (Dio 69.12.1), of a temple dedicated to Zeus as the immediate cause of rebellion. As we have seen, however, cause and effect do not meet so spontaneously in this case (Bowersock 1980). Revolt began no earlier than 132, two years after the likely date of the foundation of the *colonia*. Based on Jewish reactions to Roman violations of Jerusalem's sanctity in the previous century, the *colonia*'s introduction of a Roman temple on the site of Jerusalem might well (as Dio claims it did) have been expected to provoke uproar. If so, it did not do so immediately. It is also striking that Hadrian, an emperor who generally sought to promote peaceful rule, did not anticipate significant protest over this development of Jerusalem.

Dio's explanation of the revolt does not account for its timing. A more immediate provocation is required between the foundation of Aelia (130) and the outbreak of revolution (132). That is supplied by the slender evidence of Hadrian's supposed biographer, Pseudo-Spartianus, in the fourth-century *Historia Augusta*. There it is claimed that 'the Jews began war, because they were forbidden to mutilate their genitals' (*SHA, Hadrian* 14.2). A universal ban on circumcision, part of Hadrian's development of earlier imperial prohibitions of castration, is probably to be connected with his tour of the East in 130–2. Its historicity is confirmed by a subsequent law exempting Jews from the prohibition under the reign of the next emperor, Antoninus Pius (*Dig.* 48.1.11pr.). This special exemption may reflect a Roman sense that the ban was a factor behind the revolt. Although Jews were by no means the only people affected by such a ban, many will undoubtedly have seen it as a hostile action by the Roman State against their religious practice. However, opposition to circumcision may have been a policy that some Jews supported prior to the revolt: rabbinic evidence refers (at this time) to the recircumcision of Jews (probably under the compulsion of the rebels) who had previously reversed their circumcision (*t. Shab.* 15.9; Schäfer 1981, 1990; Birley 1997: 271).

The documentation left behind by the rebels themselves provides no straightforward cause for the revolt (Benoit et al. 1961; Avigad 1961, 1962; Yadin 1963, 1971; Lewis 1989; Cotton and Yardeni 1997). Their slogans and activities, military and administrative, suggest, however, that the primary motivation was independence. Their propaganda is preserved in their coins, overstrikes of previous mints, which publicized their aspirations and that, through symbols of the land and the Temple cult, sought to exploit the patriotic and religious feelings of other Jews (Meshorer 1982: ch. 8; Mildenberg 1984).

Like the rebels of the First Revolt, these rebels styled their land as 'Israel', a proclamation of the ancient independent land as defined by Scripture. The coins proclaimed the liberation of this land and of Jerusalem. However, the rebels' real territorial gains were much more limited, and these proclamations of freedom must, to a large extent, be taken as programmatic statements (but cf. Eck 1999: 81). The evidence is clear that they did control territory to the south of Jerusalem, with centres at Herodion and Bethar, but it does not put them, at any time, in Jerusalem or any other major urban centre in or outside Judaea.

The coins and documents also proclaim a new political regime, marked by the beginning of a new calendrical era. The leadership of this regime, in contrast to that of the First Revolt, appears to have been centred on one man, Shimeon bar Kosiba, styled in the rebel documentation as '*nasi* (prince) of Israel'. Coins dating to the first two years of revolt also proclaim the co-leadership of one 'Eleazar the priest', about whom nothing else is known for sure. In later rabbinic and Christian writings, Shimeon is connected with the messianic title 'Bar Kokhba' or 'son of the star', derived from messianic interpretation of Numbers 24.17 (y. *Taanit* 4.8; *Lam. Rabbah* 2.4; Euseb. *Hist.* 4.6.2). (This prophecy was read as a promise by many Jews in antiquity of a future leader who would defeat the foreign enemy: 'a star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Seth'.) These same sources, Jewish and Christian, remembered him as a failed messianic pretender. It is unclear whether Shimeon regarded himself as a messiah: the title he attached to himself, *nasi*, may represent a claim to messianic status but it is also used of Jewish leaders without implying that claim. Similarly, the acclamation of a *nasi* and a priest may reflect messianic beliefs such as those found in the Qumran *War Scroll*, but it also may have been intended to replicate the pattern of government under the ancient kings of Judah with no such implication.

As a leader, Shimeon's own documents reveal him as very strict both in demands for support and for correct observance of the Sabbath and festivals (*IEJ* 1961: 42 no. 3; *DJD* II no. 44, pl. xlvi). Jewish support for the revolt never appears to have been very widespread: the huge scale of Jewish casualties should not be taken as an indication of the victims' participation in the war. Towards the end of the revolt, Shimeon's letters indicate the level of difficulty just in maintaining the support of his armed followers (*IEJ* 1961: 46 no. 12). Little else is known of the identity of the rebels though their documents hint that at least some of them were wealthy.

In view of their resources, the rebels' achievements were remarkable. A substantial amount of territory near Jerusalem came under their control, to the extent that Shimeon was able to issue administrative documents recording the leasing and tithing of this land. What is most striking, however, is the rebels' ability to keep massive Roman forces occupied from spring 132 until autumn 135. Their construction of a sophisticated system of underground hiding-places appears to have been crucial in this temporary success (Kloner 1983).

Hadrian's actions during and after the revolt show this was regarded as a very serious crisis: the best general of the day, Julius Severus, was brought in from Britain (133/34) to replace the ineffective efforts of the governor Tineius Rufus; extra recruits were drummed up in Italy; and, after victory, a grateful emperor bestowed the highest honours on his leading generals. For the first time in his rule, Hadrian marked a victory with an alteration in his title: from 135, Hadrian presented himself as Imperator II (Birley 1997: 275).

The revolt cost a huge loss of life on both sides (Dio 69.14.1). Roman casualties were excessive and Roman memories of these losses would last a long time (Fronto, *Parthian War* 2). Of the Jews, Dio reports that very few survived. The human cost on the Jewish side is revealed in microcosm in the sad remains of skeletons, clothes and documents recovered at Nahal Hever, the victims of Roman blockade and

massacre (Avigad 1961, 1962; Yadin 1961, 1971: 60–5; Aharoni 1962). Later Jewish writers also remembered the enormous devastation of Jewish life in the siege of the final rebel stronghold of Bethar. Many Jewish survivors ended up on the slave market.

JUDAEA AFTER 135

The development of the new colony of Aelia Capitolina continued, representing until the time of Christian emperors, a relatively minor provincial centre of which little is known. Caesarea, as the provincial capital, would soon become an important Jewish centre in the post-Temple era. Four years after the revolt, the province of Judaea acquired a new official name, Syria Palaestina. Though Hadrian was dead by then, the move may be attributed to him. Its rationale is unknown, though it may have been meant as a punitive measure, erasing the distinctly Jewish nature of the province's name. If so, it was an unprecedented form of punishment in the history of the Roman Empire.

For the most part, the memory of Hadrian in Jewish tradition is profoundly negative. The vilification of Hadrian, 'May his bones rot', is probably to be linked to his measures for the suppression of the revolt rather than for any later punitive actions. Rabbinic evidence for the prohibition of certain communal practices (*m. Shabb.* 4.11; *b. B. Bat.* 60b; *b. San.* 14a; *b. Ber.* 61b), if authentic, is likely to reflect measures taken during rather than after the revolt. The same is probably true of the stories of Jewish martyrdom under Hadrian (Schäfer 1995: 159–60; though cf. Herr 1973).

Early Christian claims that Hadrian banned Jews from Aelia Capitolina and its environs after 135 are widely accepted as true (Euseb., *Hist.* 4.6.3–4; Tert., *Adv. Iud.* 13; cf. Justin, *Apol.* 1.47; *Dial.* 16.2). If authentic, the ban must, according to the contemporary Roman definition of Jewishness, have applied only to Jews who publicly practised their religion. It is by no means certain, however, that the ban should be considered authentic (Krauss 1996: 18). The evidence for a ban has no clear support in Roman sources, a remarkable silence in view of the unprecedented nature of this punitive measure (but cf. Rendell-Harris 1926). Moreover, the evidence of early rabbinic writings and archaeology points to both continued Jewish visits to former Jerusalem and a continued Jewish presence there in the late second century and beyond (Safrai 1975; Schwartz 1986). The Christian claim, first attributed to Ariston of Pella in Eusebius, may represent an exaggeration of some other punitive measure in the immediate aftermath of the revolt. The exaggerated presentation of this measure as a ban on all Jews was, as early Christian writers show clearly, influenced by the desire to attribute divine prophecies of doom, including Isaiah's prophecy of exile from Jerusalem, to the Jews (Isa. 33.17; cf. Euseb. *Chronicle of Hadrian* Year 18). It is not clear then that former Jerusalem did become thoroughly non-Jewish after 135.

There is no doubt, on the other hand, that Jewish presence throughout the province was significantly diminished as a result of the revolt. Death and enslavement account for much of the 'devastation' that Dio records (Dio 69.13.2). Substantial emigration by Jews was seen as a serious problem by some rabbis who, after the revolt, demanded that Jews return to inhabit the land. Others, whether under the rabbis' influence or not, began a new trend in Jewish practice and reflected

their sense of identity with the Land by choosing to be buried there (Gafni 1997: chs 3–4). At the same time, however, the impact of the new colony of Aelia and its religious culture, together with the loss of the Temple, meant that, for many Jews, former Jerusalem became a much less significant place as a place to live (or to aspire to do so) than it had been. But signs of Jewish life are by no means lacking in this region after 135: substantial Jewish communities continued in much of former Judaea, and signs of recovery appear already in the second century (Schwartz 1986).

Defeat did not end Jewish hopes for the restoration of the holy city and the Temple, hopes that later had some support in the attempts of the Emperor Julian to rebuild it. Further afield, Jewish life continued to flourish – in the West in Rome and in Asia Minor; and the rabbinic movement began to develop its programme for renewing Judaism without a Temple and without access to the holy city, in Babylonia, the place of the first exile from Jerusalem.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

ISRAEL'S NEIGHBOURS

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Bustenay Oded

THE PHILISTINES

General

Studies of the Philistines' history and culture combine textual, pictorial, and archaeological information. Most of the written information on the Philistines speaks of them pejoratively (cf. the derogatory term 'Philistinism'). This negative image emerges from their adversaries who fought prolonged wars with them, mainly the Israelites for whom the Philistines were the implacable foe. Nevertheless, archaeological excavations in Philistia and material remains uncovered at Philistine settlements, combined with the copious scholarly studies of the extant sources, provide clear insights into their cultural world and their proper place in the history of the ancient world. One must, however, be aware that the circumstances of the Philistines' appearance in Palestine, the exact connection of the monochrome and 'Philistine bichrome' ware with the Philistines, and the population composition of Philistia are still controversial.

Origins

The biblical sources state that the Philistines came from Caphtor, which may be a synonym for Crete, or from Cilicia in Anatolia (e.g. Amos 9:7; Ezek. 25:16). The Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions and their associated pictorial reliefs, especially those from the mortuary temple of Ramesses III in Medinet Habu, in which the Philistines are mentioned for the first time, describe the impending invasion by the 'Sea Peoples', as modern scholars call them. These texts (ANET: 262–3) present the Philistines as arriving from the islands in the north (the Aegean basin) by land and by sea, together with allied peoples, to invade Egypt in massive numbers (not just a few invaders or mercenaries), probably through the Nile Delta, looking for a new land to settle on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Names of several groups of 'Sea Peoples' mentioned in the Egyptian records and in the Bible can be associated with names found in the records and literature from the Aegean world, and so provide a clue to their origins: *Ikwiš* = Achaia; *Šrdn* = Sardinia; *Luka* = Lykia; etc. The unique Philistine title *seren* (always plural, *seranim*) probably derived from

the Hittite *Tarwanis* (Greek *Tyranos*). Achish, the king of Gath (Septuagint Anchus, cuneiform Ikausu) is similar to the Trojan hero Anchises (*Iliad* II, 819). Goliath can be compared with Alyattes, king of Lydia. Hence, the Sea Peoples, were Indo-Europeans. Among them the Philistines were not of Semitic but of Indo-European origin. There are many similar cultural traits that verify hereditary relationship and historical connections between the Philistines' customs and those known in the Aegean–Mycenaean world. Goliath's battle gear is similar to typical Aegean armour, and hand-to-hand combat to decide the issue is reminiscent of the challenge to a duel described in the Homeric epic.

The very detailed reliefs of Medinet Habu illuminate the physical appearance of the Philistines as well as their dress, vehicles, and weapons, and demonstrate similarities between the Sea Peoples and the Mycenaean and Anatolian world. The reliefs depict scenes of land and naval battles against different groups of Sea Peoples. The vessels bear a remarkable resemblance to the Aegean vessels of that time (Stager 1995: 338). Some of the Sea People soldiers wear the so-called feathered headdress helmet with chinstraps very similar to one of the signs on the yet-undeciphered script on the clay disc known as the Phaistos Disc from Crete (fifteenth century BCE). The Aegean context of the material found in Philistia, primarily the pottery, establishes the Philistines' Aegean origins. In conclusion, the entire range of evidence relating to the Philistines points to the Aegean orbit as the place from where they migrated by land and sea at the turn of the thirteenth century BCE, when the Hittite empire and the Aegean civilization collapsed, marking the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age.

The initial settlement

Papyrus Harris I relates that Ramesses III defeated the Sea Peoples and stationed them 'by hundred-thousand' in Egyptian strongholds providing them with food and clothing 'from the treasuries and granaries every year' (*ANET*: 262). Despite the exaggeration of the description, most scholars take this information as evidence that Ramesses III recruited the defeated invaders as mercenaries and garrisoned them in settlements in Canaan, such as Gaza, Dor, Megiddo, and Beth-Shean. The Bible mentions the five city-states (Pentapolis) of the Philistines – Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath (not yet identified) – with their agricultural periphery and subsidiary settlements. Archaeological excavations contribute the major part in identifying Philistine settlements on the plausible assumption that the Iron Age I monochrome IIIC:1b and the bichrome (red and black decoration) should be associated with the Philistines (Stone 1995: 24). On the basis of textual and archaeological evidence, we can generally demarcate the extent of Philistia. It stretched from the southern coast of Palestine in the west to the western slopes (Lower Shephela) of Judaea in the east, and from Gaza and its environs in the south to Tell Qasile near the Yarkon River in the north.

History

Soon after the initial period of settlement, the Philistines extended their territory to the north and east, exerting pressure on the Israelite tribes. This is the age of the



Figure 26.1 A Philistine captive. From the reliefs of Ramses III at Medinet Habu. Twelfth century BCE. Copyright AKG Berlin/Erich Lessing.

Philistines' political and military hegemony in Canaan. They were better organized than the Israelites, who failed to maintain technological parity with the Philistines. The latter were superior in smithery and produced advanced weapons, and even monopolized metalwork (1 Sam. 13:19–20). They controlled the highway, known later as the Via Maris, up to Megiddo and Beth-Shean. They built garrisons at strategic points (1 Sam. 10:5; 1 Sam. 23:14) and defeated the Israelites in several skirmishes, oppressing them and even destroying the foremost holy shrine at Shiloh and capturing the Ark of the Covenant. Their pressure forced the tribe of Dan to move to northern Galilee (Judg. 18), and was a factor in the transition to monarchy in Israel. They crushed Saul's army on the slopes of Mount Gilboa, where the first king of Israel was killed.

The balance of power changed completely during the first years of David as king of all Israel. He defeated the Philistines in three battles (2 Sam. 5:17–25; 8:1; 25:15–22), broke their confederation, drove them out of the central hill region, restricted their territories to Philistia proper, and subjugated them as vassal states.

The splitting of the united monarchy of Israel freed the Philistines from Israelite control, but they did not regain primacy in Palestine. Continuous conflict with the kingdom of Israel and mainly Judah altered the frontiers (1 Kings 15:27; 16:15–17). One or more of the Philistine cities rendered tribute to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah

(2 Chron. 17:11), but they probably threw off Judaeen control during Jehoram's reign (see 1 Kings 8:23; 2 Chron. 21:16–17).

Important information about Philistia during the eighth and seventh centuries BCE can be drawn from the Assyrian records. Adad-nerari III (809–783 BCE) claimed that he imposed tax and tribute on *Palastu* (Philistia), while Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BCE), campaigned against Hanun, king of Gaza (734 BCE), and against Mitinti (I), king of Ashkelon (732 BCE). Hanun made a formal submission to Assyria, and paid tribute. Silbel, who was enthroned in Gaza by Sargon II, was a loyal subordinate to Assyria. Sargon II settled deportees on the border of the 'Brook of Egypt' (716 BCE) in order to consolidate the Assyrian hold on the southern border of Philistia. In 713 BCE Azuri, king of Ashdod, rebelled against Assyria. Sargon II deposed Azuri and enthroned Ahimiti, Azuri's brother. But the Ashdodites hated his (Ahimiti's) reign and elevated Iamani (a Greek from Cyprus) instead (*ANET*: 286). This rebellion is also referred to in Isaiah 20:1 and on a dark basalt fragment of a stele erected in Ashdod by Sargon II (T. and M. Dothan 1992: 143). Ashdod suffered a terrible massacre at the hand of Sargon when he put down the revolt, deported many Ashdodites and organized the city as a province. Two reliefs in the palace of Sargon II that commemorate his siege on Ekron and Gibbethon are probably connected with the campaign against Ashdod in 712 BCE (Yadin 1963: 418–19). Nevertheless Ashdod is mentioned as a metropolis ruled by a local king named Mitinti who paid tribute to Sennacherib on his military expedition against Tyre, Judah, Ashkelon, and Ekron in 701 BCE. This expedition, which is known from the Bible (2 Kings 18–19; Isa. 36–7; 2 Chron. 32) and from the inscriptions of Sennacherib (*ANET*: 287–8), took place after Sidqa, king of Ashkelon, and the nobility of Ekron conspired together with Hezekiah against Sennacherib. Padi, the king of Ekron, who remained loyal to Assyria, was deposed by the Ekronites who handed him over to Hezekiah. Sennacherib conquered Ashkelon and its enclave in the north of Philistia, deported Sidqa and his family, and enthroned Sharruludari, the son of Rukibtu, who had earlier been deposed by the rebellious Sidqa. On his way to conquer Ekron, Sennacherib met a large Egyptian force *en route* to help the rebels. Sennacherib defeated the Egyptians on the plain of Eltekeh, north of Ekron, continued to Ekron, and punished the rebels. He released Padi from Jerusalem and reinstated him as king of Ekron. As for Hezekiah, Sennacherib claims that his towns 'which I have plundered, I took away from his country and gave them (over) to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron and Silbel, king of Gaza. Thus I reduced his country' (*ANET*: 288). The men from Philistia who did forced labour in Nineveh during the reign of Sennacherib were probably deportees from Ashkelon and Ekron (*ARAB*: 383).

There is no explicit evidence that the kings of Philistia made any attempt to rebel again during the reigns of Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) and Ashurbanipal (668–633 BCE). On the contrary, Silbel of Gaza, Mitinti (son of Sidqa) of Ashkelon, Ikausu (Achish, son of Padi) of Ekron, and Ahimilki the Ashdodite are mentioned among the kings who provided Nineveh with labour and building materials in 679 or 677 BCE (*ANET*: 290–1). They took part in the building of Kar-Esarhaddon on the Phoenician coast in 678 BCE (*ANET*: 290). Ashurbanipal required these four kings, and others, to supply troop contingents to join his first military expedition to Egypt

in 667 BCE (*ANET*: 294). Assyrian documents relating to taxation and conscription from various vassals (e.g. *SAA* I, no. 110; ND 2672) refer to taxes and tributes paid by Philistine cities. Padi of Ekron is mentioned in an Assyrian bulla dated 699 BCE as delivering one talent of silver to the king's palace (*SAA* XI, no. 50).

Towards the end of Ashurbanipal's reign the Assyrian empire disintegrated. The major powers that exploited the vacuum and struggled over the Assyrian inheritance were Egypt and Babylonia. Evidently, from the last third of the seventh century and during the early sixth century BCE the Philistines' settlements suffered destruction from the kingdoms of Judah, Egypt, and Babylonia. According to Jeremiah 47:5 Pharaoh (probably Psamtik I) attacked Gaza and Ashkelon. According to Herodotus (II:157) the pharaoh besieged Ashdod for 29 years and conquered it with the help of Greek mercenaries (around 640 BCE). The archaeological finds indicate that Ashdod suffered destruction, probably at the hands of Psamtik I (T. and M. Dothan 1992: 138, 187). Egypt controlled the Syro-Palestinian area until 605 BCE, the year when Nebuchadnezzar II crushed the Egyptian army at Carchemish and reduced all the land 'from the river of Egypt unto the river of Euphrates, all that retained to the king of Egypt' (2 Kings 24:7; Jer. 25:8–11; *ABC*: 99). Philistia came under the rule of the Babylonian empire.

According to the Babylonian Chronicles, in 604 BCE Nebuchadnezzar captured and plundered Ashkelon (cf. Herodotus, I:105). The survivors were deported. Two sons of Aga, king of Ashkelon, and other Ashkelonites were taken into captivity (*ANET*: 308). There are references to exiled Philistines in Mesopotamia (Gitin et al. 1998: 180). In an Aramaic royal letter, found at Saqqara/Memphis, a king named Adon, probably the king of Ekron, informed pharaoh about the advance of the Chaldaean armies and appealed for urgent military aid against the impending Babylonian attack (around 603 BCE: *KAI* no. 266). A thick layer of destruction debris at Ekron indicates that the city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II, whereas Ashdod was reduced to a very small town (T. and M. Dothan 1992: 187–8).

Evidently, Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod were no longer distinctive Philistine cities with a political, ethnic, and cultural identity from the Persian period on. Philistia was organized as a province of Ashdod by the Babylonians, or perhaps later as administrative units by the Persians. At long last, the Philistines of non-Semitic origin gave their name (Palastinoi, Palastium), to the country; it was first used by Herodotus (I:105; II:104) for the southern coast and subsequently became the geographical-administrative designation for the entire country: Palaestina, Palestine.

Culture and acculturation

The intrusion of the Philistines from the Aegean basin to Palestine involved transplanting their Mycenaean (pre-Helladic) culture to their new abode. In the first phase of their presence in Palestine (twelfth century BCE) they maintained a distinctive ethnic and cultural identity among the various groups in Palestine, which were mainly of Semitic origin. Nevertheless, already from the late twelfth century BCE their initial Aegean culture became permeable to outside influences (Iacovou in Gitin et al. 1998: 332–44). The Philistines were farmers, herders, and city dwellers. The townspeople concentrated mainly in the Philistine Pentapolis in well-fortified cities

that were divided into public, residential, cultic, and industrial quarters. The temples, palaces, and other large buildings discovered at the urban centres indicate the existence of skilled architects, artisans, and builders. A unique architectural feature was the hearth at the centre of public buildings, as found in Tell Qasile and Ekron (twelfth–eleventh centuries BCE), reminiscent of the hearths in the shrines and palaces in Cyprus and the Aegean world.

The Philistines had the technology and skill to produce metal implements for military and agricultural purposes. The uncovered furnaces for melting ores at Ekron, Tell Qasile, and Tell Jemmeh, and metal tools found in large quantities, hint at many metalworkers and smelters engaged in industrial activities. Highly skilled pottery makers preserved the main artistic features of their homeland Mycenaean prototypes, and produced very delicate and finely crafted ceramic artefacts. The monochrome Mycenaean IIIC:1b (twelfth century BCE) is a scholarly and technical designation for locally made monochrome (black or red) pottery. It is Mycenaean in shape and style, but made of local clays (Stager 1995: 344–55). The typical decorations and motifs are horizontal bands, streamers, loops, birds, and fishes. The typical vessels are kraters, bell-shaped bowls, stirrup jars, and jugs with a strainer spout. This monochrome pottery soon evolved into elaborate bichrome ware, designated by the archaeologists as ‘Philistine bichrome’ (red and black) or neo-Philistine, decorated with patterns of concentric, circular, or semi-circular horizontal bands, stylistic birds looking backwards, and fishes, all reminiscent of the original Mycenaean and Cypriot motifs and traditions. The abundance of loomweights found at Ekron, Ashkelon, and Tell Qasile indicate the existence of a textile industry. Ekron was a large centre for olive-oil production (Gitin 1995; 1997). Archaeological excavations at several sites demonstrate that under Assyrian domination Philistia enjoyed an economic and cultural revival (Gitin 1997: 82–3).

The excavations at Tell Qasile, Ashdod, and Ekron have yielded an abundance of cult structures and artefacts, a combination of Aegean cultic traditions with religious elements of neighbouring societies. The Philistines’ religion was polytheistic and syncretic (Judg. 10:6; 1 Sam. 31:9). Dagon (the god of grain) a prominent god worshipped all over the Semitic world, was adopted into the Philistine pantheon (Judg. 16:23; 1 Sam. 5:1–5). They worshipped Ashtaroah/Astarte (1 Sam. 31:10), a Canaanite goddess. A god called Baal Zebub, a Semitic name, was worshipped at Ekron (2 Kings 1:2–3, 6, 16). A large storage jar found at Ekron bears the inscription ‘sanctified to Asherat’ (a Canaanite/Phoenician goddess). The inscription of Achish, the son of Padi, discovered at Ekron, written in a local Canaanite script and a Semitic language, commemorates the dedication of a sanctuary to a non-Semitic female deity possibly called *ptgyb* (Dothan et al. 1997; A. Damsky reads *ptnyb*). In the temple complex in Ashdod was found a unique long-necked figurine in the stylized image of a seated female, probably a Philistine goddess, very similar to the Aegean figurines of seated goddesses of the Late Bronze Age. Throned cultic figurines in the form of a female were also found at Tell Qasile (Mazar 1986: 12–13), Ekron, and Ashdod (T. and M. Dothan 1992).

The Philistines worshipped their gods at sanctuaries (Judg. 16:23–30; 1 Sam. 31:10). The excavations at Tell Qasile of the twelfth and eleventh centuries BCE, and those at Ashdod and Ekron of the seventh century BCE, uncovered sanctuaries

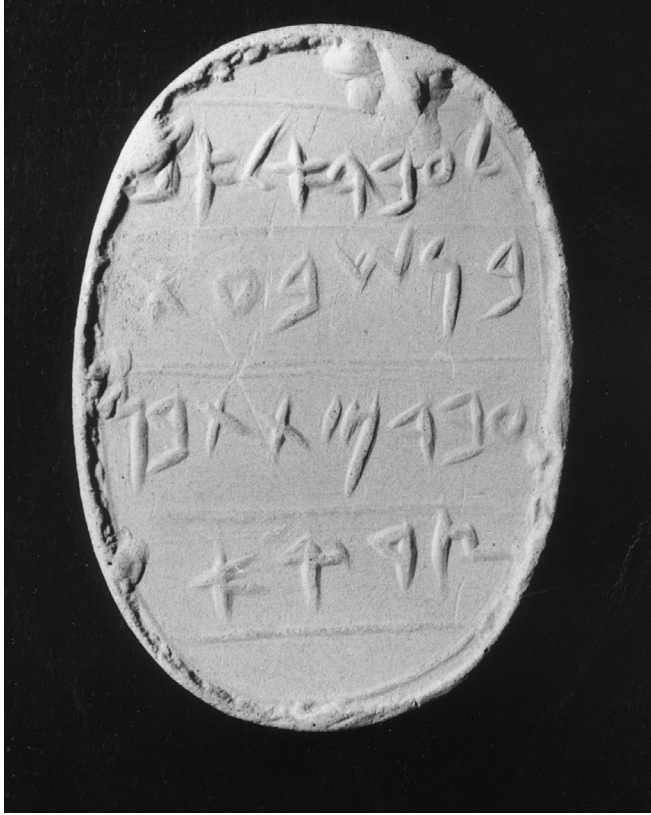


Figure 26.2 A Philistine seal with the inscription 'Belonging to 'Abdiliab son of Shib'at servant of Mitinti son of Sidqa'. Seventh century BCE. Copyright British Museum.

with cultic objects among which are bronze wheels with eight spokes each, known from Cyprus as part of a cult stand (cf. 1 Kings 7:27–30; T. Dothan 1995:48). The Philistines had diviners, priests, and soothsayers as part of their cultic personnel (1 Sam. 5:5; 6:2–5; 2 Kings 1:2; Isa. 2:6). In several places, such as Tell el-Farah, Beth-Shean, Lachis, and Deir el-Balah, human-shaped clay coffins (anthropoids) with detachable lids in the shape of faces were found in the context of Egyptian artefacts and Philistine bichrome pottery. One of the lids from Beth-Shean has the shape of the feather headdress. Evidently this is an Egyptian manner of interment. Another burial custom, Mycenaean in origin, is the rock-cut communal tomb.

Surprisingly, no clear example of early Philistine script has been found. Hence, we have no substantial evidence of original Philistine writing, although a few inscriptions from about the eighth and seventh centuries BCE were found in Philistia (Naveh 1985). The script is a local version of Hebrew/Phoenician script, in a Semitic language that may be called 'Neo-Philistine' (Stager et al. 1996: 65). The biblical narratives supply some indications about their original language. The names Achish and Goliath and the term *seren* relate to Aegean or old Anatolian dialects. Most of

the known names of kings of Philistia from the eighth to seventh centuries BCE, such as Hanun, Azuri, Rukibtu, Sidqa, and Matat (Mitinti) are west-Semitic (Dothan et al. 1997).

The adoption of foreign cultural traits was a long historical process. The Aegean heritage started to fade by the eleventh century BCE. The process of acculturation was completed during the Persian period, from which point no further ethnic or cultural distinction could be made between the inhabitants of Philistia and the surrounding population.

THE PHOENICIANS

Name and sources of information

Phoenicia is a later substitute Greek name for Canaan in its limited sense of the narrow coastal strip stretching from Mount Cassius (Gebel Arqa) in the north to the plain of Acco in the south. The coast is indented and has excellent natural harbours. In Homer (*Odyssey*, IV:85), where the geographical term 'Phoenicia' appears for what seems to be the first time, the name 'Sidonians' is used to designate the inhabitants of Phoenicia. In the Bible the names 'Canaan' and 'Tyre' or 'Sidon' sometimes mean the Phoenician coast and sometimes its inhabitants (Gen. 10:19; Num. 13:29; Josh. 13:2–6; Isa. 23:8). Many scholars believe it derives from 'Phoinix', which means dark red, purple, since the Phoenicians were renowned for producing and trading in purple dye. The Phoenicians themselves called their land by the general name 'Canaan' or after the city-state in which they dwelt or whence they came, such as 'Tyrian', 'Sidonite', 'Byblian' (original 'Sori', 'Sidoni', 'Gabli'). The Phoenician language and script, the names of the Phoenician kings, and their culture's origin, all prove that the Phoenicians were Canaanite in origin (cf. Gen. 10:15).

The reconstruction of the Phoenician history (twelfth–sixteenth centuries BCE) combines several sources: Phoenician/Punic records, the Bible, Egyptian and cuneiform documents, classical Hellenistic and Latin compositions, and archaeological material. The corpus of Phoenician inscriptions found in Phoenician and Punic settlements (KAI nos 61–173, 277) is composed almost entirely of stereotype-style dedicatory or tombstone inscriptions. Nevertheless, a wealth of evidence about the existence of major historical literature is to be found. From the Wen-Amon report it seems that Byblos had chronicles of the kings (*ANET*: 27). Josephus Flavius tells of scrolls kept in Tyre that recount events in Tyre and foreign countries (*Against Apion*, I:17; *Ant.*, IX:283–4). Josephus also quotes from such authors as the Greek Dio, who composed a history of Tyre, and Menander of Ephesos (*Ant.*, VIII:144) who used Tyrian chronicles. Philo of Byblos (first century CE) used the composition of a Tyrian writer Sanchuniyaton (seventh century BCE). The major cities of Phoenicia are archaeologically unknown. Sarepta (Sarafand), Tell 'Arqa, Tell Kazal, Khaldé (south of Beirut), Tell el Burak and other sites along the coast of Palestine (such as Achziv, Acco, Dor, Athlith, Sharon Valley) have yielded remains that shed little light on the history of the Phoenicians but contribute to the study of the material culture.

Political history

The Phoenician city-states

The history of the Phoenicians is the history of individual city-states. The major city-states were Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, and Arvad, all ruled by kings. By conflation of several sources, ancient and late, it is possible to reconstruct the king-lists of Byblos, Tyre, and Sidon (Katzenstein 1997: 349). The authority of the Phoenician kings was limited, and subject to municipal and civic bodies whose precise nature is not yet clearly known. The ‘Elders of Byblos’ (Ezek. 27:9) were the wise men (Ezek. 27:8) who helped to direct the state. The kings maintained small armies because they relied on the natural defences of their cities and their strong surrounding walls. The wars in which the Phoenicians engaged were generally in defence of their cities, and they rarely participated in distant military campaigns. Because of their international sea trade they possessed fleets of merchant vessels and warships, which were used by the imperial power such as the Assyrians, and later the Persians.

The most important cities in Phoenicia during the Iron Age period were Tyre and Sidon. Apart from its strong surrounding walls, Tyre enjoyed the advantage of a natural defence against attack from the sea (Ezek. 27:32). The mainland sector facing the island was called Palaetyrus in the Hellenistic sources, probably Ushu in the Assyrian records. Palaetyrus supplied the Tyrians with water, timber, and agricultural products, and was used as a graveyard. Tyre dominated towns such as Achziv, Acco, and Dor (Stern in Gitin et al. 1998), called by Ezekiel (26:6) ‘her daughters which are in the field’.

It seems highly likely that Tyre and Sidon were incorporated as one kingdom during the tenth to eighth centuries. Tyre became the capital of the Sidonians (1 Kings 5:15, 20; 1 Chron. 22:4). Hiram I strengthened and enlarged the capital, renovating its temples and increasing its fleet. He suppressed a rebellion in the Tyrian colony in Cyprus, and made an alliance and established trading relations with both King David and King Solomon (2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kings 5:15). The richness, grandeur, and splendour of Tyre and its kings are outlined in the prophecies of Ezekiel, [chapters 26–28](#).



Figure 26.3 Tyre, depicted as an island fortress, on one of the bronze strips that decorated the residence of Shalmaneser III (859–824 BCE) at Balawat (Imgur-Bel) near Nimrud. The scene shows Tyrians bearing tribute to the Assyrian king. Copyright British Museum.

Phoenicia and Israel

The kingdom of Tyre/Sidon had good relations with David and Solomon, and later with Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (ninth century BCE) owing to common political and economic interests. David's victories over the Philistines and the Aramaeans enabled the Phoenicians to develop their trade and establish a maritime economic empire. The great building projects undertaken by David and Solomon – the Temple, the royal palace and the fortified cities – were planned and executed with the aid of Phoenician artisans, technology, and building material. Hiram I supplied David and Solomon with timber from the Lebanon (2 Sam. 5:11). In return, Hiram I received agricultural products, mainly oil and wheat (2 Kings 5:26; and cf. Ezek. 27:17). The Israelite kingdom was a prime market for the Phoenicians' industrial products and technological knowledge. The Phoenicians, skilled in art and ship-building, were 'shipmen that had knowledge of the sea', and the uninterrupted passage from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea gave them access to raw material in the distant south. Hiram and Solomon launched a joint mercantile expedition in the Red Sea (1 Kings 9:26–8; 10:11–22).

When the united monarchy was divided into two rival kingdoms of Israel and Judah, Phoenicia lost the advantage of the presence of a single political entity extending from the borders of Phoenicia to the Red Sea. Moreover, the Phoenician kingdom of Tyre itself underwent internal crisis when Abdastratus, the grandson of Hiram I, was murdered and, after a period of anarchy, the throne was seized by Ethbaal, the priest of Ashtoreth (*Against Apion*, 1:18). Later, the rise to power of Omri in Israel and Ethbaal I in Tyre (c. 887–856 BCE) created conditions suitable for the renewal of economic relations between the two states. Omri made peace with the kingdom of Judah, so once again the Phoenicians had free access to the Red Sea. Ahab, son of Omri, was married to Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, 'the king of the Sidonians' (1 Kings 16:31). Their daughter Athaliah was the wife of Jehoram, king of Judah. The triple alliance of Phoenicia, Israel, and Judah, strengthened by marriage ties among the royal houses, brought economic benefits to all three. Jehoshaphat planned to renew the route to Ophir with Israel, which had close relations with Tyre (1 Kings 22:49–50). Ahab's palace in Samaria and the city walls were built by Phoenician masons and under their supervision. Because of the economic and political ties between the two countries Phoenician culture, as indicated by the biblical texts, filtered into Israel (1 Kings 18:19; 16:32; 2 Kings 10:21; 11:18). Nevertheless, the success of Jehu's revolt in Israel and of Jehoiaada in Judah weakened Phoenician influence in Samaria and Jerusalem and impaired relations among the kingdoms of Israel, Judah, and Tyre.

Phoenicia and Assyria

The Phoenicians did not oppose Tiglath-pileser I and there is no evidence of any opposition on their part to the campaign of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) along the coast. In the battle of Qarqar in central Syria (853 BCE), Byblos, Irqanata (Arqa), Arvad, Usanata (Ushnu), and Siyanu joined an anti-Assyrian coalition of 12 kings, among them Hadadezer the Aramaean, king of Damascus, and Ahab the Israelite

(*ANET*: 278–9). In 841 BCE, on his campaign against Hazael of Damascus, Shalmaneser III took tribute from Tyre, Sidon, and Jehu king of Israel (*ANET*: 280). Like Shalmaneser III, Adad-nirari III does not mention any campaign against the Phoenician coastal cities. He records that he levied tribute from Tyre, Sidon, and Joash, king of Israel, and erected a royal stele at Arvad in the context of his military campaign against Damascus in 802 or 797 BCE (*RIMA* 3/2: 211).

The Assyrians asserted various forms of direct control over Phoenicia from the time of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BCE), whose policy was to establish a stable Assyrian suzerainty as far as ‘the brook of Egypt’. Ethbaal (or Hiram II) of Tyre, Shiptibaal the Byblian, and Matanbaal of Arvad paid tribute between 743 and 738 BCE (*TPIII*: 68, 171). Tiglath-pileser III established the province of Simirra at the foot of Mount Lebanon, which included the northern shore of Phoenicia, and deported many inhabitants (*TPIII*: 67, 105, 136, 148). Tiglath-pileser III mentions in his inscriptions, as Assyrian officials do in letters to Calah (Nimrud), Assyrian trading stations (*karum*) and emporia (*bit-kari*) in Philistia and Phoenicia (*TPIII*: 104).

In 734 BCE Hiram II, together with Israel and Damascus, plotted against Assyria. Tiglath-pileser III set out on a rapid expedition against the rebellious kings and Hiram paid heavy tribute (*TPIII*: 187). Later on, Matenna (Matan II) of Tyre, perhaps a usurper, paid a huge amount of gold and silver to Assyria as tribute (*TPIII*: 171, 191). Tiglath-pileser III established a new province on the coast of Palestine, whose capital was *Du’ru* (Dor), tightened the Assyrian grip, and restricted the autonomy of the coastal cities. Assyrian officials were appointed as supervisors of the key port cities to assure the payments of taxes and tributes, to watch the political behaviour of the local kings, and to control the export–import trade. A letter (ND 2715) from an Assyrian official in Phoenicia confirms that the timber trade, the basis of the Phoenician economy, was under Assyrian control, much to the resentment of the local population and Egypt. According to Menander, the Assyrians besieged Tyre for five years with the help of ships from the neighbouring Phoenician cities (*Ant.*, IX:283–7). There is no record of how the campaign ended, but it is possible that Sargon II (722–705 BCE) came to terms with Tyre since neither a war between Sargon and Elulaios nor the surrender of Tyre is mentioned.

In 701 BCE Sennacherib set out to subdue the rebellion in the west. His annals relate that Luli, king of Sidon (Tyre), fled from Tyre far overseas to Yadanana (Cyprus), as depicted also in a relief in the palace of Sennacherib in Nineveh. Sennacherib installed Tuba’lu (Ethbaal) on the throne of Tyre and imposed on him a tribute to be paid annually. The kings who had not participated in the rebellion, among them Abdili’ti of Arvad and Urimilki of Byblos, received the king of Assyria near Ushu with heavy tribute.

The relations between Phoenicia and Assyria were quite different in the time of Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) and Ashurbanipal (668–627 BCE), who both adopted a policy of complete control over the sea trade of the Phoenician coastal cities. In 677 BCE Abdimilkuti, king of Sidon, revolted against Esarhaddon (*ANET*: 290–1). The Assyrian king conquered Sidon, looted its treasures, destroyed the city and cut off the head of Abdimilkuti. He built a new city near Sidon, which he called Kar Esarhaddon (fortress of Esarhaddon), and organized a new Assyrian province where he settled exiles from various conquered lands. Tyre now regained its prominence

among the Phoenician cities. Moreover, Baal, the Tyrian, had a treaty with Esarhaddon according to which Tyre apparently received certain trading rights along the Phoenician and Palestinian coast (*ANET*: 533–4). Baal of Tyre, Matan-Baal of Arvad, and Milkiashapa of Byblos are mentioned among the ‘22 kings of Hatti, the mainland and the islands’, who were forced to transport building material to Nineveh (*SAA* II: 5). The failure of Esarhaddon’s campaigns in Egypt in 674 BCE had repercussions in Phoenicia: Baal, king of Tyre, who relied on Tirhakah, king of Egypt, as well as Iakinlu, king of Arvad, apparently broke free of Assyria. In 671 BCE Esarhaddon set out on a campaign against Tyre and Egypt, captured the cities of Baal and annexed them, taking from Tyre heavy tribute and reorganizing part of the territories of Tyre on the mainland as a province (*ANET*: 291). Baal surrendered but continued to rule Tyre. Ashurbanipal, like his father Esarhaddon, lists the kings of Tyre, Byblos, and Arvad among the 22 kings who were compelled to support him with troops and ships in his first campaign against Egypt (667/6 BCE). The inscriptions of Ashurbanipal (*ANET*: 295–6) mention a second campaign to Egypt (663 BCE) as well as a war against Baal, king of Tyre, who had good relations with Egypt. Ashurbanipal deported the members of the royal family, as well as Iahimilki, son of Baal, but said, ‘I had mercy upon him and returned to him the son, the offspring of his loins’. Between 651 and 646 BCE Ashurbanipal punished the inhabitants of Acco and Ushu ‘who did not obey their (Assyrian) governors’, conscripting some into his armies and deporting others to Assyria (*ANET*: 300). This is the last Assyrian expedition to Phoenicia that we know about.

Phoenicia in the Egyptian–Babylonian maelstrom

During the last years of Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian control over the Syrian and Palestine area eventually collapsed, creating a political gap that allowed Egypt to reimpose its political supremacy over them, especially over the seaports. It is likely that Necho II (610–595 BCE), who went north to help the Assyrians against the Babylonians, had some sort of control over Phoenicia, as well as over Philistia and Judah.

After the decisive victory of Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BCE) over the Egyptian armies in 605 BCE, the Babylonian king led several campaigns to bring all the Syro-Palestinian region (‘Hatti Land’) under his control. Phoenicia succumbed to him and paid the tribute demanded, but attempted to cast off the Babylonian yoke at the instigation of Egypt. According to Jeremiah (27:3), delegations from Tyre and Sidon came to Jerusalem contemplating an anti-Babylonian act (probably in 593 BCE).

Ezekiel’s prophecies about the destruction of Tyre and Sidon by Nebuchadnezzar II (26:7; 28:20–3; 32:30), were presumably connected with the siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar II. Josephus relates that in the time of Ithobaal III, Nebuchadnezzar II besieged Tyre for 13 years (*Against Apion*, I:156), probably from 586/5 to 573 BCE (Katzenstein 1997: 325–32). According to Ezekiel (29:17–18) he did not capture the city. The kings of Tyre, Sidon, and Arvad are listed in a certain document (?570 BCE) from the court of Nebuchadnezzar as exiles (*ANET*: 308), indicating that the Babylonian king conquered the Phoenician city-states. All Phoenicia was

under Babylonian dominance (Katzenstein 1997: 333–7), until 539 BCE, when Cyrus conquered Babylonia. The territories ‘beyond the river Euphrates’ became part of the Fifth Satrapy (Herodotus, III, 19:91). Yet the Persians did not abolish the monarchies of the Phoenician city-states which provided the Persians with naval power. Because of its special ties with Persia Sidon became the most important kingdom in Phoenicia. Nevertheless, the centre of the sea trade moved westwards to Carthage and Greece.

Culture

The Phoenician culture is a development of the second-millennium Canaanite culture, with inevitable changes caused by commercial and political contacts with foreign peoples and lands, and by technological advances (Markoe 1990).

Language and script

Phoenician belongs to the family of North-western Semitic languages, and is a Canaanite dialect of the Iron Age period. Punic is the designation of the Phoenician language as spoken in Carthage and elsewhere in the west Mediterranean, mainly from the sixth century BCE onwards. Like the language, the script too is a development of the proto-Canaanite writing of the Late Bronze Age.

Religion

Details about the religious practices are mainly from second-hand sources. All the evidence indicates that the Phoenician religion was rooted in the ancient Canaanite cult and influenced by Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Syrian, and Aegean religions. The Phoenician deities were associated with individual city-states, each with its chief god. The principal goddess of Byblos was Baalat Gebal (Mistress of Byblos), probably a fertility goddess. Sidon’s most important deity is Eshmun, also called Baal-Sidon. His mate was Astarte (Ashtoreth), ‘the goddess of the Sidonians’ (1 Kings 11:5; 2 Kings 23:13).

The chief deity of Tyre was Melqart, the ‘Lord of Tyre’. In addition, the Phoenicians worshipped Baal-Shamem/n, Baal-Zephon, Baal-Rosh, Baal-Lebanon, Dagon, Adonis (known only from Greek sources and identified with Eshmun), Resheph, and Ashera. The Phoenicians took their gods and goddesses with them wherever they established colonies in foreign countries. In the Phoenician/Punic colonies the chief deities were Baal-Hamon and his mate Tanit. The Phoenicians tended to worship their gods on hilltops and to link a certain god to a certain place (mountain peaks, springs, and lakes) as his abode (e.g. Baal-Lebanon). Temples/shrines to the Phoenician/Punic deities are mentioned mostly in dedicatory-type inscriptions (e.g. *KAI* nos 62, 72, 81). The priesthood had priests and priestesses among whom were the king and the queen. The calendrical feasts were connected with the agricultural cycle. Details of Phoenician cosmogony are preserved in late compositions, mainly of Philo of Byblos (Clifford 1990: 58–9; Culican 1991: 472).

A special issue is the problematic and much debated subject of child sacrifice (Clifford 1990: 58; Gras et al. 1991: 150–74). The archaeological finds are inconclusive. On the basis of biblical references (Lev. 18:21; 23:10; 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; Jer. 32:35) scholars explain 'tophet' as graveyards in which are cinerary urns containing bones of children and/or bones of animals. A tophet (with stelae) from the eighth to sixth centuries BCE was found at Tyre (Sader 1991). The sanctuary of Tanit and Baal-Hamon in Carthage, where urns containing calcined bones of children and lambs were buried, is also called by scholars 'tophet', or 'the Precinct of Tanit'. Beside the urns were stelae dedicated to Tanit and Baal-Hamon. The tophets in the Phoenician and Punic world indicate, according to scholars, the existence of an institution of ritual infanticide. This view is supported by the biblical phrase 'passing through fire' to Molech, by classical sources, and by the phrase *mlk 'dm* in the Punic inscriptions, where the term *mlk* is interpreted as a kind of sacrifice. Others think that child sacrifice was practised only at times of great calamities (Gras et al. 1991: 159); or perhaps these graveyards are only for infants who died, for example, from disease.

Art and craft

There are many references to the 'cedars of Lebanon' in the Egyptian, biblical, and cuneiform texts (e.g. 1 Kings 5:24[10]; Isa. 14:8). The supply of cedar and fir timber necessitated a skilled infrastructure for cutting and transporting the large beams (1 Kings 5:20 (English versions 5:6)). The Phoenician artisans produced carved woodwork and excelled in shipbuilding and navigation (cf. Ezek. 27). The Assyrian reliefs show several types of Phoenician ship (Aubet 1993: 146–51).

An important, widely known Phoenician speciality was the large-scale production of purple dye (blue-purple and red-purple) produced from secretions of the murex marine snails common in the shallow waters along the rocky shore of Phoenicia (Ward in Hoerth 1994: 200). In addition, the sand along the Phoenician coast was especially suited to the industry of multicoloured glass bottles and flasks (Uberti in Moscati 1988: 474–91; Aubet 1993: 269–70). Best known of the Phoenicians' art and craft are their artistic ivory carvings, metal utensils, and various precious objects, mostly discovered outside Phoenicia proper (see 2 Chron. 2:14; 1 Kings 7:14) as far as Spain.

The special features of Phoenician handicraft were the workmanship, design, and combination of borrowed motifs of various origin, mainly Assyrian and Egyptian (Markoe in Bikai et al. 1990: 31–5). The Phoenician pottery profile is represented by archaeological finds in Phoenicia (Sarepta, Tyre, Khalde) and the northern coast of Palestine (Achziv), Cyprus, and throughout the Mediterranean basin. First (before the tenth century BCE) appears bichrome ware, with reddish-purple bands influenced by the Cypro-Aegean fashion (Anderson 1990). Then follows 'black on red' ware with decorations in black (Bartoloni in Moscati 1988: 492–510; Culican 1991: 473–5; Anderson 1990).



Figure 26.4 A Phoenician ivory plaque with gold leaves and lapis-lazuli, depicting a lioness devouring a Nubian negro. Found at Nimrud, probably brought to Assyria as booty or tribute. Eighth century BCE. Copyright British Museum.

International trade and colonial expansion

The diffusion of Phoenician culture corresponded with Phoenician mercantile activity and colonial expansion. The maritime trade along the shores of the Mediterranean basin became the linchpin of the Phoenician economy. Ezekiel 27 reflects the thalassocracy of Tyre during the eighth to seventh centuries BCE and its commercial activity all over the ancient world.

The Phoenicians developed a mercantile economy based on industry and export. The large-scale export of goods necessitated a search for raw materials from which these goods were produced; in addition, new overseas markets were sought. The Phoenicians sailed to Ophir for gold (1 Kings 22:49), to the kingdom of Sheba for perfumes and spices, to Gadir (Spain) for silver and other metal ores. The fact that the Phoenicians excelled in long-voyage navigation and were skilled in the manufacture of expensive small objects ('minor arts') made transportation and widespread trade and distribution easier and increased profitability. The westward seafaring necessitated the establishment of victualing stations along the coasts as far as Spain. Although opinions differ about the beginning of Phoenician colonial expansion to the Mediterranean islands and along the Mediterranean coast (Aubet 1993: 170–87), some date this as early as the twelfth century BCE and others as late as the sixth century with regard to the western Mediterranean and the shift from trade to colonization. Another question is which western settlements were established by

Phoenicians who came from the homeland, and which by settlers from Carthage. Modern research appears to vindicate the view that the Phoenician penetration of the western Mediterranean must have begun no later than the late ninth century BCE.

Phoenicians traded with Cyprus (Alashiya), from where they imported copper (Muhly in Gitin et al. 1998: 323). From Cyprus and the coast of Anatolia they could sail west and trade with the Aegean islands' inhabitants, before reaching the gold mines of Thrace (Herodotus, VI:47). In Sicily too there are traces of Phoenician presence. An important settlement was Motya on the western coast of Sicily facing Sardinia in the north, where there was copper to be mined; and Malta, Carthage, and the Moroccan coast in the south. In Nora (Sardinia) two Phoenician inscriptions have been found, which most researchers consider ancient. One of them, 'The Nora stone', probably dates to the ninth century BCE (*TSSI* no. 11). In it is a reference to *tršš* (Tarshish), the location of which is much debated.

The most famous Phoenician settlement is Carthage on the Tunisian coast. The original form of the name was *qrthdšt* (New City). Many scholars believe that Carthage took over the thalassocracy from the city-states of Phoenicia from the sixth century BCE on, and established its own network of colonies in Sicily, Sardinia, and elsewhere.

The quest for metals brought the Phoenicians to Spain with its metalliferous sites, yielding silver, copper, lead, tin, and mercury (cf. Ezek. 27:12; 1 Macc. 8:3; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* III:30; Aubet 1993: 64, 75–6, 118–19, 236–41. For another view see Muhly in Gitin et al. 1998). Although Strabo says that the Phoenicians sailed beyond the Pillars of Hercules, explored Iberia, excavated the silver mines of Tartessos and founded Gadir (Gades, modern Cadiz), all before Homer (Strabo, III.2:14; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* III:30), scholars date the Phoenician infiltration into Spain between the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, some even later. In Portugal the Phoenicians (or Punic merchants) found excellent timber, tin, and gold. A few sites on the Atlantic coast of Morocco have been identified as Phoenician/Punic settlements from the sixth to fifth centuries BCE (Aubet 1993: 247–9).

Phoenician history proves that a relatively small population in a small country, with a small army, can achieve much by exploiting natural conditions and by industry and ability. The international commerce and colonial expansion also generated mutual cultural influences. The biblical narratives about the Tyrian–Sidonian influence on Israel and Judah are only one example.

ARAM-DAMASCUS

Origins

The Aramaeans of ancient Syria are the western branch of the Aramaean tribes that spread across Syria and Mesopotamia from the twelfth century BCE. No Aramaean traditions about their origins are known. The biblical tradition assumes a close relationship between the Aramaeans and their Israelite ancestors (Gen. 22:21). According to Amos 9:7 the Aramaeans came from Qir, an unidentified place. Aramaean tribes are first mentioned by Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 BCE) as *Aḥlamû*

Aramayya. He claims that he pursued the Aramaeans across the river Euphrates as far as Mount Bishri (RIMA 2/1: 34, 37–3). From the eleventh century BCE on the Aramaeans constituted the major part of the population in Syria and a considerable ethnic element in Mesopotamia. Among the dozens of Aramaean tribes and states, Aram-Damascus played a major role in the political history of Syria and Palestine during the ninth to eighth centuries BCE, until its destruction in 733–732 BCE.

No Aramaean historiography concerning the Aramaean states in southern Syria has survived. Most information on the Aramaean states comes from the Bible, the Assyrian inscriptions, and from a few archaeological finds (Lemaire 1991: 91–5).

History

By the end of the 11th century BCE a series of kingdoms in Syria were ruled by Aramaean dynasties. Hadadezer, king of Aram-Zobah, established a union of Aramaean kingdoms under his hegemony, as a first step towards creating a single Aramaean kingdom in Syria. His realm encompassed the Ante-Lebanon mountains and the northern Lebanon valley. The term ‘kings of Zobah’ in 1 Samuel 14:47 apparently refers to kings who were vassals of Hadadezer and his ‘servants’ (2 Sam. 8:7). The hegemony and influence of Aram-Zobah extended from the Euphrates to the land of the Ammonites (2 Sam. 8:3; 10:16–19; 2 Chron. 18:3; 19:6–8, 18–19). Saul’s efforts to block Aramaean penetration in Transjordan were continued by David, who put an end to Hadadezer’s expansionist ambitions (2 Sam. 8:5–6). The Bible ascribed to David decisive victories over Aram-Zobah and its vassals (around 1000 BCE). He annexed the kingdom of Aram-Damascus as a province to be ruled by Israelite governors. Northern Transjordan became a source of conflict between Aram and Israel.

During the reign of Solomon, Rezon, who had been a servant of the king of Zobah, seized Damascus and proclaimed himself king there. This kingdom rapidly became a major factor in Syria–Palestine, and Israel’s most dangerous neighbour. The king of Damascus adopted Aram-Zobah’s goal of unifying Aramaean states in Syria around a single centre (Damascus) and Aramaeizing northern Transjordan. The division of the united kingdom of Israel into two inimical kingdoms (Israel and Judah) only helped the kings of Damascus to realize their goal for hegemony over all Syria and Palestine. The penetration of Ben-Hadad into Galilee (1 Kings 15:18–20) was not an isolated event but an episode in a series of similar developments in the mutual relations of Aram and Israel.

The Assyrians had continuous conflicts with the Aramaean states in Syria, mainly during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, especially with the major kingdom of Aram-Damascus against which Shalmaneser III led several campaigns. Hadadezer, king of Damascus, presided over an anti-Assyrian league of ‘12 kings’, among them Ahab king of Israel. The purpose of the coalition was to block the Assyrian imperial advance towards Syria and Palestine. The battle took place at Qarqar (853 BCE), in the vicinity of Hamath. The alliance of the ‘12 kings’ appears to have been successful in halting Shalmaneser III’s advance. In fact, the Assyrian king was obliged to fight Damascus again and again. Hadadezer and Ben Hadad (II), who was involved in bitter conflicts with Ahab of Israel, are two names that seemingly refer to the

same king (Pitard 1987: 125–32; 133–8). Jehoahaz and Jehoash, kings of Israel, waged several wars with Aram-Damascus, half a century later, when Israel was bitterly pressed by Hazael and his son Ben-Hadad (III) (Pitard 1987: 115–20). Hazael conquered all of Israelite Transjordan as far as the Arnon, and may have extended Aramaean influence to Edom and to Philistine cities (2 Kings 10:32–3; 12:18–19; Amos 1:3; Lemaire 1991: 101–2). Samaria became subservient to Aram (1 Kings 20:1–11; 2 Kings 5:6–24). An Aramaean inscription from Tel Dan commemorates the victory of the king of Aram over Israel (Biran and Naveh 1995: 1–18). Evidence of the activities of the kings of Aram-Damascus in Syria is present in the stele of Zakur king of Hamath and Lu'ash (Pitard 1987: 170–4). The title 'king of Aram' given to Bar-Hadad, the son of Hazael, in Zakkur's stele, and Bar-Hadad's position as leader of the allied Aramaean and neo-Hittite forces fighting against the king of Hamath, clearly demonstrate that from the beginning of the ninth century the kings of Aram-Damascus generally played the primary role among the Syrian states from Arpad in the north to Bashan in the south to the degree of that of 'empire' (Lemaire 1991: 104–6). Moreover, the inscriptions of Adad-nerari III (809–782 BCE) call the king of Aram-Damascus 'lord' (RIMA 3/2: 211, 213) which was the title used by the vassal governors in addressing the king of Aram, and not a proper name (for the inscription from Samos see Dion 1995: 485). Hazael assassinated the former king (Bar-Hadad/Hadadezer) and ascended the throne sometime between 844 and 842 BCE. Shalmaneser III fought against Damascus during the reign of Hazael (841, 838, 837? BCE), besieged Damascus, took much booty, destroyed many towns, but did not conquer the capital or enthrone another king instead of Hazael (RIMA 3/2: 54, 60, 62, 77, 118). Nevertheless, as soon as the Assyrian pressure on Damascus subsided, Hazael and his son Ben-Hadad (III) seized their opportunity and again started to oppress Israel (2 Kings 8–12; 13:3–7), reaching even Philistia and Judah in the south (2 Kings 12:18–19).

According to the biblical narratives, 'the Lord gave Israel a saviour so that they went out from under the hand of Aram' (2 Kings 13:5). Most scholars identify this 'saviour' with Adad-nerari III, who fought against Mari'/Bar-Hadad, the son of Hazael, between 802 and 796 BCE. Adad-nerari claims that he besieged Damascus, conquered it, and took heavy tribute (RIMA 3/2: 209, 211, 213). According to a stele found near Maras (in Turkey), Shamshi-ilu, the field-marshal of Shalmaneser IV, marched to Damascus and took heavy tribute from Hadianu (*ba-di-a-ni*) the Damascene (RIMA 3/2: 240).

Aram-Damascus enjoyed a further short period of strength before its final destruction by Assyria. Rezin (*Ra-bi-a-nu*; *Ra-qi-a-nu*; *Rdyn*) who seized the throne in Damascus, planning to reinstate it as the metropolis of a great Aramaean kingdom, is mentioned in the list of kings who paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser III, apparently in 738 BCE (TPIII: 55, 107). Rezin initially allied himself with the usurper Pekah, king of Samaria, against Jotham, king of Judah (2 Kings 15:37). During the reign of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, an Aramaean–Ephraimite coalition, in which Rezin was the dominant partner, invaded Judah, preparing to besiege Jerusalem and to crown a certain Ben-Tabeel, apparently a Judean from Transjordan near the Ammonite border (Isa. 7). Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns in southern Syria and Palestine were primarily directed against Damascus, because Rezin was the leader of an anti-Assyrian

coalition consisting of Damascus, Israel, Gaza, and Ashkelon. Tiglath-pileser III conducted a grisly reprisal against Damascus (733–732 BCE), besieged Damascus, and captured ‘the wide land of Bit Hazaeli’ (i.e. the kingdom of Damascus; *TP III*: 81): He deported the population and killed Rezin (2 Kings 16:9) and annexed the kingdom of Damascus to Assyria (Tadmor 1994: 139, 187), dividing it into several provinces, one of which was the province of Damascus.

Culture

Our knowledge of the culture of the Aramaeans is very limited. The Aramaeans certainly used Aramaic for various purposes, but owing to the perishability of papyrus and parchment in the Syro-Mesopotamian climate these documents are lost. The lack of archaeological excavations in the territories of the ancient kingdom of Damascus,



Figure 26.5 Horse's forehead ornament with an Aramaic inscription according to which the blinker was given 'to our lord Hazael'. Found at Samos (Greece) but is of north Syrian origin. Ninth century BCE. Copyright Deutsches Archäologisches Institut-Athen.

including Damascus, make the investigation of Aramaean culture more difficult. As the Aramaeans were scattered throughout Mesopotamia and Syria, even from their initial appearance, there is no unique Aramaean civilization. On the basis of extant data it is impossible to discern distinct Aramaean features. It would not be far wrong to assume that the culture of the Aramaean tribes and kingdoms was a blend of their west-Semitic Amorite or *Ablamû* legacy, their autochthonic predecessors, and foreign influences, mainly neo-Hittite, Phoenician, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian. No specifically Aramaean pottery, metalwork, or seals can confidently be isolated as uniquely Aramaean. The most one can say is that the Aramaeans made only slight contributions to art and craft and to political and social systems and practices.

Hadad was the pre-eminent deity and the head of the Aramaean pantheon. He was already worshipped by the west Semites (Amorites) in Mesopotamia and northern Syria during the Old Babylonian period, and was considered to be the storm god, equivalent to the Assyrian god Adad. His cognomen is Ramman (biblical Rimmon) 'the thunderer' (2 Kings 5:18; Zech. 12:11). 'Hadad' and 'Ramman' appear as theophoric elements in personal names (1 Kings 15:18; Greenfield 1987: 68). Bar-Hadad, an Aramaean king (probably of Damascus) revered Melqart (*ANEP*: 499). From the old Aramaic inscriptions and the Aramaean nomenclature we can include in the Aramaean pantheon deities like El, Rakib-El, Baal, Shamash, Resheph, Dagan, and Sahar (equivalent to the moon god, Sin). Hadad-Ramman had a temple in Damascus called Beth-Rimmon (2 Kings 5:18), possibly under the present Great Mosque (Lemaire 1991: 95). In the Tell Fakheriye (north Syria) inscription of an Aramaean ruler named *bdys'y* (Hadad is my salvation) there is a reference to the temple of Hadad, the bestower of fertility (Greenfield 1987: 68). Rites of mourning the dead and of appeasing them were among the religious practices. A mortuary rite connected with the deity Hadad-Ramman is mentioned in Zechariah 12:11.

The Aramaeans borrowed their alphabetic script from the Canaanite/Phoenician script during the eleventh century BCE. Only during the eighth century BCE was the independent characteristic Aramaic cursive script developed (Layton 1988: 174–5). The Aramaean version of the alphabetic script spread all over the ancient Near East, supplanting the complicated cuneiform system of writing. The diffusion of the Aramaean script led to the spread of Aramaic as a medium of communication, starting from the eighth century BCE and widely used during the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. The earliest phase of the Aramaic, labelled generally as 'Old Aramaic', is represented by inscriptions from the tenth to seventh centuries BCE, as distinct from 'Imperial Aramaic' (Persian period), 'Biblical Aramaic', and later dialects. Aramaic is the major contribution of the Aramaeans to the civilizations of the Levant because it became the lingua franca, used for commercial, legal, administrative, diplomatic, and literary purposes. Documents in Aramaic language and script have been discovered all over the Near East.

THE KINGDOMS OF TRANSJORDANIA: AMMON, MOAB, AND EDM

General

The nature of the country

The term 'Transjordanian' refers to an extensive territory that abuts to the west on the River Jordan, the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, and the Arabah between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Elath, and to the east on the Syrian-Arabian desert. The Yarmuk flows between the Golan and Bashan in the north, and Gilead in the south. The Jabbok (Wadi Zerqa) divides northern Gilead (al Ajlun) from southern Gilead (al-Belqa). The Arnon (Wadi Mujib) flows into the Dead Sea; to its north is the tableland called the Land of the Plain (Mishor, Jer. 48:21) and to its south are the mountains of Moab. The Zered (Wadi el-Hasa) makes its way between the plateau of Moab and the plateau of Edom/Seir, which extends southwards to the Gulf of Elath.

The economy of Transjordanian was based on pasturage and cultivation of field corn and various kinds of vegetables and fruits. Some of the inhabitants were semi-nomad pastoralists (especially in Moab and Edom) and some sedentary, living in farms, villages, towns, and fortified urban centres. In the Arabah a metallurgy industry developed. In the forests of Gilead and the high mountains of Edom (Seir) trees were felled for building and fuel, and for balsam for pharmaceutical purposes (Gen. 37:25; Jer. 8:22; 46:11; Ezek. 27:17).

The Transjordanian kingdoms also benefited economically from controlling the trade routes that traversed their countries. Alongside the main routes settlements arose. The 'King's Highway' linked Egypt and the Arabian peninsula with Syria and Mesopotamia. But as a frontier land, bordering the Great Desert, the extent of the security that could be given by the central government to persons and property against the desert brigands determined whether the land would prosper or decline.

Sources and problems

The Bible still remains the major source for the history of the Transjordanian peoples and kingdoms and for our knowledge about the origins of the three kingdoms, Ammon, Moab, and Edom, and their populations before the ninth century BCE. The biblical traditions relate that before these three peoples settled in the land and established their ethnic-national kingdoms, others were present there (Gen. 19:30-8). When the tribes of Israel arrived from Egypt the Transjordanian kingdoms already existed (Num. 21:10-20; Deut. 2:9-10). Nevertheless, the biblical authors/redactors lived many generations after the period they purported to describe. Moreover, the biblical accounts pertaining to the Transjordanian peoples and kingdoms were written from an Israelite/Judaean standpoint. Hence, despite its importance as a source of information, the Bible should not be taken entirely at face value but should be read critically and in the light of the epigraphical and archaeological evidence.

Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources provide occasional glimpses into the Transjordanian state of affairs. The Egyptian sources are important for supplying details about Transjordan during the second millennium BCE, while the Akkadian sources, mainly the neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions and administrative archives, are helpful for the study of the history of Transjordan in the first half of the first millennium BCE.

Archaeological surveys cover a considerable area from the River Yarmuk down to the Gulf of Aqaba, but few sites have been excavated in the regions of Ammon, Moab, and Edom. The beginning of modern scholarly archaeological exploration in Transjordan is marked by Nelson Glueck's work (Bienkowski 1992, *passim*). He concluded that a break in sedentary occupation had occurred during the Middle Bronze and Late Bronze Age (approximately nineteenth–fourteenth centuries). Southern Transjordan was no man's land. During the thirteenth century BCE the land was resettled by new groups who came from the east, and established their kingdoms just before the Israelites settled in Canaan, namely, the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Edomites (For Glueck's hypothesis see Sauer 1985: 206–8).

The archaeological explorations undertaken after Glueck (for archaeological surveys and excavations see Mattingly in Hoerth 1994: 330–3) show generally that (1) during the Middle Bronze and Early Late Bronze Ages Transjordan was sparsely populated (LaBianca and Younker 1995: 406–7). (2) Towards the end of the Late Bronze Age and in the Early Iron Age the number of settled sites, some of them fortified, gradually increased, but no surge of resettlement took place. (3) The number of settlements increased dramatically during the eighth to sixth centuries BCE and the land enjoyed remarkable prosperity. This is why scholars are inclined to theorize that the Transjordanian kingdoms as united states did not emerge before the eighth century BCE (Dornemann 1983: 165–70; Adams in Bienkowski 1992: 184; Dearman 1997: 206–12).

'Before any king reigned over Israel'

Although the information from various sources is still sparse, from a socio-political viewpoint it is reasonable to assume that the organized ethnic–national kingdoms developed out of confederated tribes and chiefdoms for defence purposes. This historical development is reflected in the biblical list (Gen. 36) of *allûphim* (tribal chieftains) and tribal kings (cf. 'Midianite kings' in Num. 31:8; Judg. 8:12). It seems that at the background of the emergence of the Transjordanian kingdoms, not necessarily concurrently, were several clans/tribes, which later united on the basis of common historical traditions. First to undergo the process were the Ammonites, who were more densely settled and more cultivated than the Moabites; and later the Edomites, whose terrain was sparsely occupied (LaBianca and Younker 1995: 399, 406–7, who prefer the definition 'tribal kingdoms' to true 'nation-state kingdoms'). The first mention of one of the peoples/lands known in Transjordan is found in the Egyptian inscription of Ramesses II (thirteenth century), *mu'bu* = Moab (Timm 1989: 5–9). The first to mention Edom is Merneptah (Bartlett 1989: 77), the same king who mentioned Israel (in Canaan) for the first time (thirteenth century). Extra-biblical texts mention the nomadic pastoral Shasu tribes of Edom

and of Seir (thirteenth–twelfth centuries BCE), reflecting the pre-monarchic period in Edom (Worschech 1997: 230–4).

The relationship between Israel and the Transjordanian peoples

‘So Saul took the kingdom over Israel and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines . . .’ (1 Sam. 14:47). This verse shows that, at its outset, the period of the Israelite kingdom was marked by a war between the Israelites and their neighbours in Transjordan. The history of this enmity preceded the rise of kingship in Israel and lasted until after the destruction of Jerusalem. Such mutual hatred and vindictiveness (Ezek. 25:2–14; Mal. 1:3; Ps. 83:108–9) might at first seem surprising in view of the tradition of blood kinship between the two sides (Gen. 25:19–26; 19:37–8; Deut. 2–9; cf. Ps. 83:9). The idea of ‘brotherhood’ is in contrast to the Israelites’ attitude towards their western neighbours, the Canaanites and the Philistines (Bartlett 1989: 175–86).

Ammon

The Ammonites settled on the central Transjordanian plateau, along the upper and lower course of the Jabbok and its streams, with the desert their natural frontier in the east. In the Bible their country is called Ammon or Bene-Ammon, and in two Ammonite inscriptions their country is called *bn'mn* (Hübner 1992: 21–2, 27). The earliest explicit extra-biblical reference to Ammon is in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, who mentions Sanipu, the king of *Bit-Am-ma-na-a* (TP III:171). The form (*mat*) *ba-an-am-ma-na-a* appears in a report from the time of Sargon II (SAA I, no. 110). The corpus of the Ammonite inscriptions (Aufrecht 1989) sheds much light on Ammonite culture, and the Assyrian records mention episodes in Ammonite history. Archaeological excavations in the territory of Ammon include significant settlements such as Amman, Um ed-Dannanir, Tell Safut, Tell Siran, Sahab, Tell el-Umeiri, and Hesban on the border of Ammon with Moab. Most of the archaeological finds are from the eighth to seventh centuries BCE, the period when the Ammonites flourished under the aegis of the Assyrian empire. The capital was Rabbath Bene-Ammon (Deut. 3:11; today Amman). The city’s acropolis was built on a hill today called Al Qal’a (the citadel) surrounded by deep wadis. The reconstruction of the frontiers of the land of Ammon in the north, west, and south depends on interpreting general biblical definitions of the territory of Ammon and the land of Sihon (Num. 21:24; Deut. 2:37; Josh. 12:3; etc.); on explaining the descriptions of the areas settled by the tribes of Gad and Reuben with reference to the border with Ammon (Num. 32:1–4, 33–8; Josh. 13:16–28); on determining the historical background of the prophecies about Ammon; and on defining a certain kind of structure that might have been round (*rujm el-malfuf*), rectangular, or square (Kletter 1991: 41; Hübner 1992: 150–8). From the biblical data, the array of Ammonite material, and the topographic conditions, it appears that the northern boundary was formed by the upper reaches of the River Jabbok (Deut. 2:37; 3:16; Josh. 12:2), which flows east–west to the point where the Wadi er-Rumeimin

empties into it. From here the frontier goes south towards es-Salt. The upper channels of Wadi Shueib, Wadi es-Sir, Wadi Kafrein, and Wadi Hisban formed a partition between the land of the Ammonites and the Israelite settlements. The south extremity of the land of Ammon reached the vicinity of Heshbon, which formed a buffer land between Ammon and Moab (Hübner 1992: 131–57).

The nature of the Ammonites' country – a fortified urban centre (Rabath-Ammon) surrounded by 'daughter settlements' within a wide agricultural periphery (Jer. 49:2; Amos 1:14) – and the international commerce in the ancient Near East, which was generally a royal monopoly, facilitated the unification of the Ammonites as a national state administered from their capital (2 Sam. 12:26). The corpus of the Ammonite written material combined with biblical texts and Assyrian records help to reconstruct an incomplete list of Ammonite kings (Hübner 1992: 208–9). The first one known by name is Nahash (1 Sam. 11:1). His son is Hanun (2 Sam. 11:1). Sanipu reigned in the time of Tiglath-pileser III (733 BCE). A certain Yarih-azar is mentioned in a statue from the eighth century BCE. He is the son of Zakkur, the son of Sanipu, possibly the same Sanipu mentioned above (Hübner 1992: 23–6). Sennacherib and Esarhaddon's inscriptions (end of eighth and first half of seventh century BCE) mention Puduilu. Amminadab (I) was the king of Ammon during the time of Ashurbanipal (mid-seventh century BCE). He is probably the father of Hasilel and the grandfather of Amminadab (II) who reigned towards the end of the seventh century BCE (according to a Tell Siran inscription: Hübner 1992: 27–30). Amminadab II (or I?) is known from two seals discovered in tombs near Amman (see below). The last king whose name has been preserved is Baalis (Jer. 40:14) probably the same *b'lyš'* known from a seal found in Tell el-Umeiri (Yunker in Hoerth 1994: 313). The Ammonite king was supported by a ramified administration of military commanders and officials (2 Sam. 10:3; 1 Chron. 19:3; Amos 1:15; Jer. 49:3; and several Ammonite seals). Archaeological explorations provide abundant evidence about the Ammonite culture. Ammonite pottery, usually found in graves, bears witness to the high technical level achieved by Ammonite potters. Typical were red burnished vessels decorated with white bands framed by black lines (Dornemann 1983: 171; Herr 1993: 29). The Canaanite alphabetic script used by the Ammonites was well formed and influenced by Aramaean lapidary writing (van der Kooij in Hadidi 1987: 115; Aufrecht 1989: 21–3). The Ammonite language belongs to the West-Semitic family. The national god of the Ammonites was Milkom who is known from the Bible (1 Kings 11:5; 2 Kings 23:13; Zeph. 1:4–6) and from Ammonite inscriptions and seals. The name Milkom serves as a theophoric element in personal names (Hübner 1992: 127). The Amman Citadel Inscription most likely concerns a temple construction for Milkom, whose command to build him a sanctuary was probably delivered by a seer.

According to the biblical account the hostility between Israel and Ammon started during the period of the Judges (twelfth–eleventh centuries BCE) (Judg. 3:12–14; Hübner 1992: 167–8). Nahash's friendly attitude to David (2 Sam. 10:2; 1 Chron. 19:2) was intended to harm Saul by giving refuge to his opponents. Ammonite suspicions of David's expansionist ambitions, especially after he had defeated the Philistines and Moabites (2 Sam. 8:1–2), was their main reason for making war on him, while the insulting attitude towards the Israelite delegation only added

provocation for conflict. After David had decisively defeated the Aramaean–Ammonite coalition (2 Sam. 1:8; cf. 2 Sam. 12:28), it is unclear whether he crowned himself king of Ammon in place of Hanun son of Nahash, or took the Ammonite king's crown as booty and left the local dynasty on the throne.

The enthronement of Rehoboam, whose mother was an Ammonitess, must have formed a link between Rabbath-Ammon and Jerusalem, this does not prove that the Ammonites were subservient to Judah. Apparently, the wars between Israel and Judah, and the rise of Aram-Damascus encouraged the Ammonite rulers to seek independence.

Repercussions of the Ammonite incursions across the frontiers of Israel and Judah can be found in 2 Chronicles 20 and Amos 1:13. Uzziah, and later Jotham, subjugated the Ammonites (2 Chron. 26:8; 27:5). At that time the king of Ammon was Sanipu, mentioned in the list of kings who paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser III during the Assyrian campaign in Palestine in 734–732 BCE.

Moab

The Moabites inhabited the rolling plateau immediately east of the Dead Sea, and their land initially encompassed territories on both sides of the Arnon river. North of the river, Moab included the plain (Mishor, Josh. 13:9; Jer. 48:21) up to the 'plains of Moab opposite Jericho' (Num. 22:1; 33:48), and south of the river it extended over the mountain ranges as far as the Zered (Wadi el-Hasa) valley. The eastern border of Moab was confined by the Arabian desert.

According to the biblical tradition, by the time of the first Moabite king, the Moabites had been ejected from the territory north of the Arnon by Sihon king of Heshbon (Num. 21), and the Arnon and the brook Zered became the two geographical barriers that marked their borders to the north with Israel and to the south with the Edomites (Num. 21:13; Judg. 11:18; Deut. 2:12–13). The northern plateau, from the Arnon as far as Nebo and Heshbon, was inhabited by a mixed population – Moabites, Israelites, and Ammonites.

The royal city of Moab was Kir-Hareseth (Kir of Moab, 2 Kings 3:25; Isa. 15:1, 16:11; Jer. 48:31–6). The commonly accepted identification of this city with Kerak is challenged and open to question (Miller in Bienkowski 1992: 85–6). The most important cities north of Arnon were Dibon and Medeba.

Although the land of Moab, including the Mishor, was suitable for pastorage (sheep and goats), for growing cereal crops, and for orchards and vineyards (cf. Isa. 16 and the story of Ruth), herd husbandry remained the economic basis of the region (Dearman in Bienkowski 1992: 73; and see Judg. 5:16; 2 Kings 3:4). The Moabites benefited from the international 'King's Highway' that traversed their land (Num. 20:17; 21:22; Dearman 1997: 206).

The reconstruction of the Moabites' history is based on the biblical narratives, the epigraphic material from Moab and other places, and archaeological explorations in Moab (Timm 1989; Bienkowski 1992; Miller 1997). The most important Moabite source is the Moabite inscription of Mesha, king of Moab (Dearman 1989). The general conclusion from the various excavations is that 'none of the excavated sites in Moab has a substantial occupational history in the Late Bronze period' (Dearman

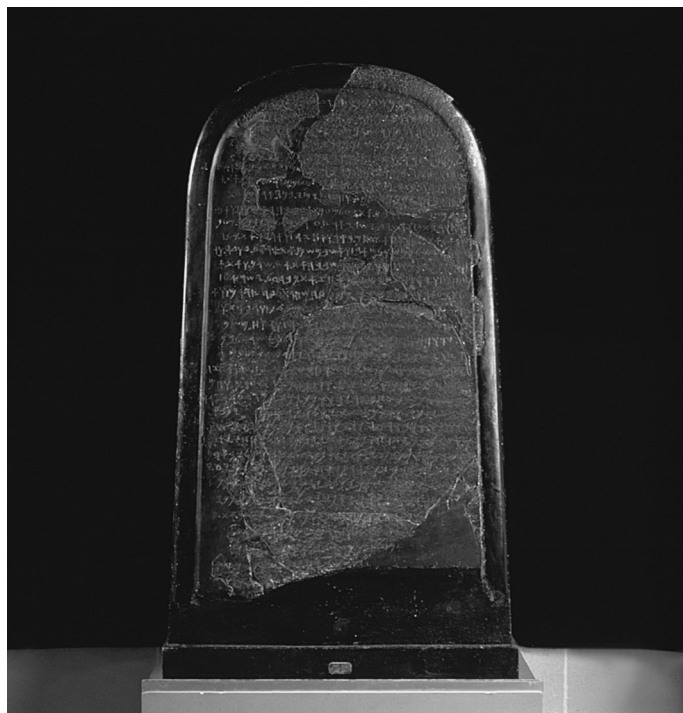


Figure 26.6 The inscription of Mesha, king of Moab (ninth century BCE). Discovered in 1868 at Dibon, Transjordan. Mesha commemorating his victories over Israel. Louvre Museum. Copyright Photo RMN, Paris.

in Bienkowski 1992: 70). It is not far-fetched to assume that the inhabitants who occupied the land of Moab during the Late Bronze Age originated from a mixture of 'pre-Moabite' indigenous clans with new settlers from the north ('Amorites') and from the east (Kitchen in Bienkowski 1992: 21–34; Mattingly in Hoerth 1994: 324; Worschech 1997: 231).

Events after the Israelite conquest show clearly that the Moabites did not give up the Plain, which became an area of conflict between Israel and Moab in the period of the Judges and of the monarchy. Moab rose up against Israel at the end of the period of the Judges (Judg. 3:12–29; Ps. 83:7, 9; 1 Sam. 14:47), only to be subjugated later by David. Yet he did not abolish the Moabite monarchy (2 Sam. 8:2). The Mesha inscription discovered at Dibon provides important first-hand information on relations between Moab and Israel in the ninth century BCE. The stele commemorates Mesha's military and building activities, even though many details in it are unclear (Dearman 1989: 196–203). According to 2 Kings 1:1, 3:5, Moab revolted when Ahab died. The inscription states that 'Omri had occupied the land of Medeba' imposing his authority on the king of Moab, who lived in Dibon. The subjugation lasted throughout the reign of Omri 'and half the time of his son' (Ahab). Mesha withheld his tribute from Ahab as an act of liberation of Moab from Omri's dynasty, and strengthened Dibon by building the *qrbh* (the acropolis), preparing to

withstand a long siege. When Ahab died in the battle of Ramoth-Gilead, Mesha marched northwards and annexed the land of Ataroth and the land of Medeba, which he conquered together with Bezer and Nebo. Mesha presents his wars against Israel as a reconquest of Moabite territories and mentions an expedition to Horonaim in southern Moab. This would mean that he almost entirely restored the borders of Greater Moab, from the River Zered to the 'Plain of Moab'. Nevertheless, in the time of Jeroboam II Israelite rule became established in the Land of the Plain (2 Kings 14:25; Amos 6:14). But after the fall of Aram-Damascus and Samaria Moab accepted the suzerainty of the Assyrian empire. Tiglath-pileser III mentions Salamanu the Moabite among the kings who paid him tribute during his campaign in Palestine (734–732 BCE).

Mesha's inscription shows clearly that the Moabite language is closely akin to Hebrew, and the script is essentially not different from Hebrew script (Timm 1989: 277–302). During the reign of Mesha, the king resided in Dibon, which was fortified. Excavations in Dibon, the archaeological survey in greater Moab, and epigraphic finds disclose outstanding technical ability in building fortresses, watchtowers, and installations for water collection (Daviau 1997: 223–4).

Kemosh was the national god of the Moabites (Num. 21:29; 1 Kings 11:17, 33; Jer. 48:46). The divine name constitutes a theophoric element in Moabite personal names (Timm 1989: 162–74). The Moabites had statues of their national god (Jer. 48:7). The worship of Kemosh in the land of Moab continued well into the third century BCE (Mattingly in Dearman 1989: 220–1). Kemosh was worshipped at high



Figure 26.7 A Moabite seal with the inscription 'Belonging to Kemosh'am (son of) Kemosh'el, the scribe'. Eighth–seventh century BCE. Copyright Israel Museum.

places (*bamah*) and in temples (1 Kings 11:7–8; 2 Kings 23:13; Isa. 16:12; ‘house of Kemosh’ in a basalt fragment from Dibon). The ban, the sacrifice of burnt-offerings of animals, or, on special occasions of humans (Num 23:1; 2 Kings 3:27), and circumcision (Jer. 9:24–5) were some of the Moabite ritual customs. The names Ashtar-Kemosh (Mesha inscription), ‘House of Baal-Peor’, ‘High-place of Baal’, little clay figurines found in abundance in various Moabite settlements, and the combination of star and crescent moon on seals all attest to the pagan character of the Moabite religion (Mattingly in Dearman 1989). Priests, seers, and diviners are mentioned in Num. 22–4; Jer. 48:7).

Edom

The land of Edom stretched from the brook of the Zered (Wadi el-Hasa) in the north along the high plateau to the shore of the Gulf of Aqaba/Elath in the south. Edom is bound on the east by the Great Desert and to the west by the Arabah valley. Certain biblical passages indicate that the land of Edom stretched west of the Arabah (Num. 34:3; Deut. 2:8; Josh. 11:7, 12:7; etc.). The territory is referred to as the land of Seir (Gen. 32:4; Num. 24:18; Josh. 24:4; Judg. 5:4; Ezek. 25:8; 35:15; 2 Chron. 25:14). Seir and Edom are mentioned in the Egyptian sources from the thirteenth to twelfth centuries BCE as the land of the nomadic tribes called Shasu who lived in tents and roamed vast regions from Seir/Edom westwards across the Negev and Sinai (Kitchen in Bienkowski 1992: 26–7, 31). Shasu is a nickname for Bedouin tribes. The Assyrian records of Adad-nirari III mention the name Edom for the first time (*u-du-mu*), but it is not certain if it refers to a kingdom or just to a land. Several sites have been excavated, such as Buseirah (Bosrah), Tawilan, Umm el-Biyara, and Tell el-Kheleifeh (north of Aqaba). The general conclusions are that (1) there is no evidence of permanent settlement in Edom during the Late Bronze Age (Parr in Bienkowski 1992: 42); (2) there are some Early Iron Age remains, mainly from the northern region of Edom (MacDonald in Bienkowski 1992), meaning that some settled occupation existed in the Wadi el-Hasa region during Iron Age I; (3) almost all settled sites, including major settlements such as Buseirah, Tawilan, Umm el-Biyara, and Tell el-Kheleifeh, failed to produce any significant Iron Age material predating the eighth century BCE (Hart in Bienkowski 1992: 94). The prevailing conclusion is that in the Late Bronze Age Edom was apparently inhabited by various nomads and semi-nomads: tent-dwellers and pastoralists. It is less likely that all Edom, from Wadi el-Hesa as far as the Gulf of Aqaba, was at that time organized as a centralized kingdom with a capital. It is not probable that the tribes had been united in the framework of a kingdom as early as the tenth century BCE (Finkelstein 1992: 164).

The economy of Edom was based on pasturage. The Edomites exploited the trading routes that traversed their land, controlled the port on the Gulf of Aqaba, and exploited the copper resources. The copper industry was a factor in the economy of Edom. Copper mining and smelting took place in the Wadi Feinan region, between Tafle and Petra (Knauf-Lenzen in Hadidi 1987: 86; MacDonald 1994: 241), and by controlling Elath/Ezion-Geber the Edomites could benefit from the trade centres in Arabia.

The assemblage of Edomite pottery shows that 'typical Edomite ceramics can be divided into three main groups: (a) decorated vessels, mostly bowls and kraters painted with black and red strips in geometric designs; (b) perforated and fenestrated cups and bowls, sometimes with denticulated decoration; (c) cooking pots with stepped rims produced from clay with Nubian sandstone temper' (Beit-Arieh 1995: 303 n. 1; Parr in Bienkowski 1992: 44).

The Edomite language was a version of north-west Semitic. The script developed from the Canaanite/Phoenician script, and was strongly influenced by the Aramaic script.

The national god of Edom was Qaus/Qos (?bow). His name appears in inscriptions and seals, mainly as a theophoric element. 2 Chronicles 25:14 intimates the polytheistic nature of the Edomite religion. Female figurines found in Edomite sites may symbolize a goddess, perhaps Astarte. Of special interest is the figurine of a goddess with a triple-horned headdress, found at Horvat Qitmit, 10 km south of Arad. This site, which offers the clearest reflection of the Edomite religion, is defined by the excavator as an open-air Edomite cultic site (Beit-Arieh 1988). In Ein Hasebah a shrine with ceramic vessels of cultic character similar to those at Horvat Qitmit was uncovered (Cohen and Yisrael 1995). A scarab seal from Tawilan depicting a crescent on a pole may represent Sin, the moon god, whose principal centre was at Harran in northern Syria. A cuneiform tablet that was written and signed at Harran and discovered at Tawilan is another argument for the assumption that the moon god was worshipped by the Edomites. Scholars believe that several verses in the Bible point to Edom/Seir as the original dwelling of YHWH (Judg. 5:4; Hab. 3:3; Isa. 63:1–6), thus indicating that the Edomites worshipped YHWH before Qaus was accepted as the chief god. Like the Moabites, the Ammonites, and others, Edomite males were circumcised (Bartlett 1989: 196–7).

Edom was among the enemies of Israel during the time of Saul (1 Sam 14:47–8). David subjugated the Edomites and appointed governors in Edom (2 Sam. 8:13–14), namely he brought them under direct control. Hadad, of the 'seed of the (Edomite) royal family', fled to Egypt and married into the Egyptian royal house (1 Kings 11:14–22), but it is not explicitly stated that he returned to Edom. By subjugating the land of Edom David secured the south-east border of his kingdom and controlled the trade route to the Gulf of Aqaba, where Solomon built a fleet of ships 'in Ezion-Geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom' (Bartlett 1989: 46–9). Edom gained its independence sometime between 848 and 841 BCE (Weippert in Hadidi 1987: 98) in the light of the tribute to Adad-nirari III (RIMA 3: 213). Judah's recovery, which began in the reign of Amaziah and continued with Uzziah and Jotham, led to its renewed control over the Arabah valley and Ezion-Geber and possibly to the subjugation of the land of Edom (2 Kings 14:7, 22; 2 Chron. 25:11–12, 14; 26:2). Specific mention of a king of Edom in the inscription of Tiglath-pileser III can serve as evidence that Edom was liberated from Judah. From this time on Judah faced a well-organized and centralized Edom, whose capital was Bosrah (Buseirah).

TRANSJORDANIA UNDER ASSYRIA'S RULE

The expeditions of Tiglath-pileser III to southern Syrian and Palestine in 734–732 BCE marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Transjordan. Tiglath-pileser III founded several provinces, among them Qarnini in Bashan, Haurina in the Hauran, and Gal'ad (Gilead) in Transjordan (TPIII: 139, 192). He mentions the tributes received from Qausmalaku of Edom, Salamanu of Moab, and Sanipu of Ammon (TPIII: 171). Several Assyrian administrative letters and lists refer to tributes accepted from the Transjordanian kingdoms (Weippert in Hadidi 1987: 100; ND 2765; SAA 1, no. 110; VII/1, no. 57; XI, no. 33). The king of Ashdod applied to the neighbouring states, including Moab and Edom, for help against Sargon II (711), but none responded (ANET: 287). In a long list of precious items issued to visiting delegations in the time of Sargon II, Padû-il of Bit-Ammon and his servants (SAA VII/1: no. 58, col. 1:4–10) are mentioned. This is probably the same *pd'l* referred to in a seal of an Ammonite official (Hübner 1992: 75–6). Sennacherib mentions that Puduilu from Bit-Ammon, Kammusu-nadbi from Moab, and Ayaramu from Edom welcomed him with many gifts at the time of his campaign in Palestine against Hezekiah king of Judah and his allies (701 BCE, ANET: 287). In 673 BCE Esarhaddon king of Assyria ordered '22 kings of Hatti, the seashore and islands', including Qausgabri of Edom, Musuri of Moab, and Puduilu of Beit-Ammon, to transport to Nineveh long beams of cedar and pine trees from the mountains of Lebanon for his palace (ANET: 291). Qausgabri, king of Edom, Musuri, king of Moab, and Amminabbi II, king of Ammon, provided him with military service on his first expedition to Egypt in 667 BCE (ANET: 298). A seal impression with the inscription 'Qausge[ber] king of E[dom]' was found in Umm el-Biyara (Bartlett 1989: 213).

From the eighth century on, the inhabitants of the desert increased their pressure on the countries of the Fertile Crescent bordering on the desert, so frontier states such as Ammon, Moab, and Edom were exposed to extreme danger. The Transjordanian kingdoms sought Assyrian protection from the nomads. The three following episodes are illustrative: (1) An Assyrian official reported to the Assyrian king about a raid on Moabite territory by men of the land of Gidir (ND 2773; Weippert in Hadidi 1987: 100 n. 42). The Moabites relied on Assyria to protect them against intrusions from any direction. (2) Ashurbanipal sent his armies to attack Arabian tribes along the eastern borders of Transjordan, defeating them 'in bloody battles' in the territories of Ammon, Moab, and Edom and in other places bordering on the desert (ANET: 298). (3) In one of the encounters with the Arabian tribes during the reign of Ashurbanipal, Kamushaltu, king of Moab, a loyal vassal of Assyria, inflicted a defeat upon Ammuladi king of Qedar who had revolted against Assyria and made forays against the kings of the Westland (ANET: 298). The Assyrians were interested in strengthening the frontier states against the desert brigands, and integrated them into the imperial defence system.

The general stability in Transjordan under the Assyrian empire improved the economy of the region. The flourishing economy of Transjordanian kingdoms in this period of *pax Assyriaca* (eighth–seventh centuries BCE) is emphasized by the plethora of archaeological and epigraphic finds (especially seals) in Ammon, Moab, and Edom.

Fortified and unfortified settlements greatly increased in number, indicating a growth of the settled population (Hübner 1992: 196; Weippert in Hadidi 1987: 102). The excavations at Buseirah, Umm el Biyara and Tawilan attest that the period of vassaldom to Assyria (Iron Age II) marked the most developed and prosperous period in Edom's history (Bartlett 1989: 136; Bienkowski 1992: 104; 1995: 139). Amos mentions the 'palaces of Bosrah'. Intimations of the prosperity of the Transjordanian kingdoms at this time can be heard in the words of Jeremiah to Ammon, the 'back-sliding daughter that didst trust in thy treasures' (49:4), and to Moab that 'trusted in thy works and in thy treasures' (48:7, 29). The Edomite penetration west of the Arabah to the Judahite Negev, beginning from the seventh century BCE and intensifying during the sixth, are expressions of the change of the balance of power between Edom and Judah. The prophecies in Zephaniah 2:8 and Jeremiah 49:1 about the expansion of Moab and Ammon were probably made against the background of the hard times in Judah after the death of Josiah (609 BCE).

THE END OF THE TRANSJORDANIAN KINGDOMS

In 605–604 BCE Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylonia, subjugated Syria–Palestine as far as the border of Egypt. The kings of Ammon, Moab, and Edom were apparently among 'all the kings of the land of Hatti' who brought gifts to Nebuchadnezzar when he was fighting Ashkelon (604 BCE) (Lemaire 1994: 11). Forces from Moab and Ammon, and probably also from Edom, served the Babylonian king and helped him quell the rebellion of Jehoiakim in 599/8 (2 Kings 24:1–2). A few years later the Transjordanian kingdoms changed their policy and joined other countries in an attempt to throw off the Babylonian yoke. In the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign (594/3 BCE), the kings of Edom, Moab, and Ammon sent messengers to Zedekiah to elaborate a plot against Babylonia (Jer. 27:3), but for unknown reasons this revolt did not materialize. Open rebellion broke out in 589/8, but Edom and Moab remained aloof (see Obad. 11; Lam. 1:7) when the Chaldean army suddenly approached. Probably only Tyre and Ammon rebelled with Judah against Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 21:23–7). The Transjordanian states nevertheless neither failed to profit from the plight and destruction of Judah nor to conceal their delight in its difficulties (e.g. Ezek. 25:3–4; Obad. 10–14; Lam. 4:21–2). A Hebrew ostrakon from Arad (no. 24) speaks of soldiers dispatched from Arad and Kinah to the city of Ramoth-Negeb 'lest the Edomites come thither' (Bartlett 1989: 149–50). Indeed, the archaeological excavations in the Judahite Negev uncovered an abundance of Edomite material, epigraphic and non-epigraphic, at several sites, mainly Ein-Hasebah, Horvat Uza, Tel Malhata, Tel Ira, Horvat Qitmit, and Beer-Sheba (Beit-Arieh 1988; 1995; Lemaire 1994: 23–6; Cohen and Yisrael 1995).

From Ezekiel 35:10–12 it is clear that the Edomites benefited from Judah's destruction (Bartlett 1989: 175–86). Ammonite involvement in Judah's rebellion against Babylonia is substantiated by Ezekiel 21:23–7 and by the episode relating to Gedaliah, the Babylonian-appointed governor of the Judaeans (Jer. 40–3), who was assassinated by Ishmael, son of Nethaniah 'of the seed royal' (of Judah), under the instigation of Baalis, the last Ammonite king. Baalis hoped to gain influence in

Judah by this intrigue. His policy of expansion is probably reflected by his taking over Heshbon from Moab (Jer. 48:2; 49:3).

A Babylonian punitive campaign against rebellious states, including the Transjordanian kingdoms, came a few years later. Josephus relates (*Ant.* X:181) that five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, namely 582/1 BCE, the king of Babylonia launched a major campaign against Syria and Palestine. He fought and defeated the Moabites and the Ammonites, and then continued his campaign against Egypt. He probably deported a section of the population. Commentators connect this expedition to the reference in one of Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions about a campaign in Lebanon (*ANET*: 307), with the information in Jeremiah 52:30 about a further deportation of men from Judah in 582/1 BCE, and with Jeremiah's prophecy on Moab that Kemosh would be taken captive with his priests and princes (48:7).

On the final phase of the Transjordanian kingdoms we have little information. The Chaldeans are nowhere explicitly said to have conquered the Transjordanian kingdoms and transformed them into Babylonian provinces. A rock relief portraying Nabunaid in southern Transjordan hints at a campaign undertaken by the Babylonian king but of this campaign we cannot know the outcome. However, the absence of clear information about these kingdoms as independent or semi-independent political entities after the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, makes it reasonable to suppose that they were organized as Babylonian provinces (Lemaire 1994).

Incursions of the desert nomads constituted one factor that pushed the Edomites westwards. The prophet Ezekiel (25:4–10; 35:15; Jer. 49:1–22; and also Isa. 11:14) accurately prophesied the punishment that was to befall the settlements in Transjordan during the sixth century BCE, a calamity reflected in the hold gained there by the nomads. The end of the kingdoms did not mean, however, that the land became completely desolated. Archaeological finds demonstrate continuity of occupation in several settlements from the neo-Babylonian period to the Persian period (Sauer 1985: 213), not as kingdoms but as Persian provinces (Weippert in Hadidi 1987: 102; Herr 1993: 34–5; Hoglund in Hoerth 1994: 343–4). The names of Ammon and Moab continued to survive as eparchies named Ammonitis and Moabitis (Hellenistic period). Edom was part of the province of Arabia (Lemaire 1994: 14, 26–7), and the name Edom moved westwards as the name of the eparchy of Idumea, south of the province of Judah.

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PART V

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE HEBREW AND ARAMAIC LANGUAGES



John Huebnergard and Jo Ann Hackett

LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

Hebrew and Aramaic are members of the Semitic family of languages, which is attested from the mid-third millennium BCE up to the present day. The Semitic family itself is part of a still larger language group, the Afro-Asiatic family (also called Hamito-Semitic), which also includes ancient Egyptian and Coptic, and several modern branches: Berber, spoken in pockets across northern Africa; Cushitic, spoken in northeastern Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia); Omotic, in western Ethiopia; and Chadic, in western Africa.

It is interesting as well as useful to review the languages of the Semitic family according to their genetic relationships to one another, that is, according to subgroups of languages within the family that are more closely related to each other than to other members of the family, and that therefore share a more recent common ancestor. The ancestor of all Semitic languages, called Common Semitic, was probably spoken until some time in the fourth millennium; since writing had not yet been invented, there are no written records of this early ancestral form of Semitic. In the fourth millennium, Common Semitic split into two branches, East Semitic and West Semitic.

East Semitic consists of only two languages, Akkadian and Eblaite. Akkadian is the language of ancient Mesopotamia, which is the earliest-recorded Semitic language, first attested in cuneiform tablets from the twenty-sixth century BCE. (Another ancient Mesopotamian language, Sumerian, which is the world's first written tongue, is not part of the Semitic family, or, indeed, of any known linguistic group.) Akkadian itself split into two branches that begin to be recognizable about the end of the third millennium, Babylonian in the south and Assyrian in the north. It continued to be spoken until some time in the mid-first millennium BCE, and was written for several centuries after that, until the first century CE. Eblaite, which is very closely related to Akkadian, was the language of the city of Ebla, about 60 km south of Aleppo in modern Syria; also written in cuneiform script, it is known from several thousand clay tablets, all of which date to about the twenty-fourth century BCE.

The West Semitic branch comprises all other Semitic languages. It split very early into two subbranches, called South Semitic and Central Semitic. Most of the South

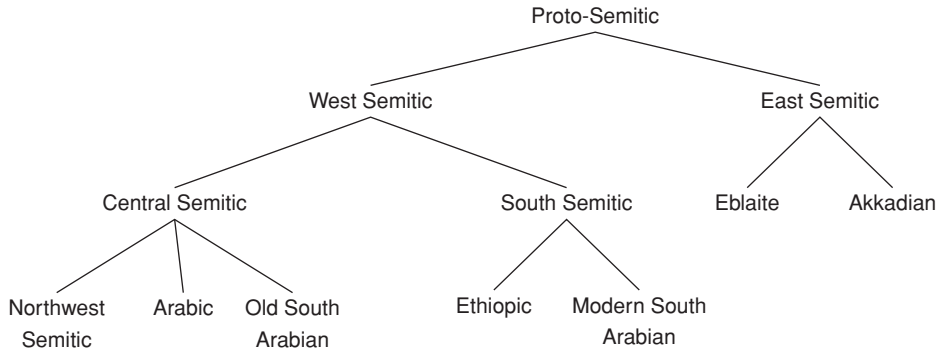


Figure 27.1 The Semitic language family.

Semitic languages are found in Eritrea and Ethiopia, including Ge'ez (or Classical Ethiopic, or simply Ethiopic), the language of the Ethiopian Christian church since the fourth century CE, not spoken (except by priests) since about the tenth century; Amharic, the national language of modern Ethiopia; Tigrinya, the national language of modern Eritrea; and more than a dozen other modern languages. Another group of South Semitic languages is spoken by a very small number of people (roughly fifty thousand, and declining) in modern Yemen and Oman, on the southern coast of the Arabian peninsula.

Central Semitic has three subbranches. The Old South Arabian (or Epigraphic South Arabian, or Sayhadic) languages are attested from about the sixth century BCE until the sixth century CE in thousands of monumental building and other inscriptions carved into rock, as well as in recently deciphered documents incised on palm-leaf petioles. The best-attested of these languages is Sabaean, the language of Saba', the biblical kingdom of Sheba. A second subbranch of Central Semitic consists solely of Arabic, from pre-Islamic inscripational dialects beginning at least as early as the sixth century BCE to the classical language of the Koran, to the plethora of modern dialects spoken today by nearly 200 million people in Africa and Asia.

At last we come to the third subbranch of Central Semitic, called Northwest Semitic, where Hebrew and Aramaic are situated. Evidence for Northwest Semitic appears as early as the beginning of the second millennium, in Akkadian (and also a few Egyptian) texts in the names of individuals who are called Amorites (whose relationship to the later Amorites of the Bible is a subject of scholarly debate). Ancient Semitic names were usually recognizable words, phrases, or sentences in the language of the name-bearer's culture. Thus, for example, the name *Rəḥel*, Rachel, means 'ewe' in Hebrew; ^a*ḥimēlek*, Abimelech, means 'my father is king' and *Yonatan*, Jonathan, means 'Yahweh has given.' Now, the names of Amorites, although they appear in Akkadian texts, are not composed of elements of the Akkadian language, but of a language that is clearly more closely related to Aramaic and Hebrew. (It is also interesting that a few of the Amorite names are very similar to Hebrew names of the patriarchal stories; thus, for example, *Abī-rām*, 'my father is exalted,' is comparable to Hebrew ^a*ḥrām*, Abram ['the father is exalted'];

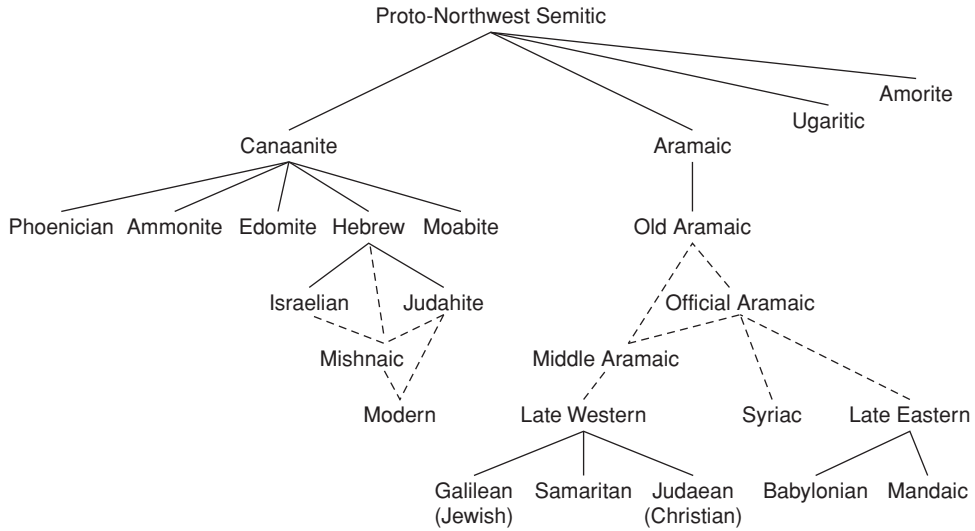


Figure 27.2 The Northwest Semitic languages.

Ya‘qub-’il, ‘the god has protected,’ is comparable to Hebrew *Ya‘qob*, Jacob [‘he has protected’].)

Clay tablets inscribed with a unique cuneiform alphabet, discovered on a Syrian tell on the Mediterranean coast in 1929, revealed a hitherto-unknown Northwest Semitic language, now called Ugaritic after the ancient name of the town, Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra). Ugaritic turned out to be very close linguistically to Hebrew and Aramaic, but the texts are from the fourteenth to thirteenth centuries BCE, and thus earlier than Hebrew or Aramaic are first attested. Because of the close linguistic kinship, Ugaritic was for the most part deciphered, and its grammar understood, on the basis of Hebrew and Aramaic. But in turn, because of its greater antiquity and the similarity of many constructions and even phrases in Ugaritic and Hebrew, especially in poetic texts, Ugaritic has elucidated the grammar and meaning of a good number of previously obscure Hebrew biblical passages.

The rest of Northwest Semitic, with one or two exceptions, is divided into two large branches: Aramaic, which will be considered in detail further below; and Canaanite, the best-attested member of which is Hebrew. Thus, Hebrew and Aramaic are fairly close cousins within the Semitic language family. Canaanite comprises a very closely knit group of languages and dialects, many of which may have been mutually intelligible. The term ‘Canaanite’ is based on the ancient geographical term ‘Canaan,’ where its member languages were spoken. After Hebrew, the most important member of the Canaanite branch is Phoenician, the language of the important Phoenician cities of Byblos, Beirut, Tyre, Sidon, and others, and their colonies, such as Carthage (Phoenician *qart-ḥadašt*, ‘new town’; the Phoenician dialect of Carthage is traditionally called Punic). Also Canaanite were the languages of other of Israel’s neighbors: Ammonite, known from a few small inscriptions and seals; Edomite, still more sparsely attested; and Moabite, known especially from a long

mid-ninth-century BCE inscription of the Moabite king Mesha (2 Kings 3:4), an inscription that in mentioning the Israelite king Omri furnishes the earliest extra-biblical attestation of a person mentioned in the Bible (although mention should be made of a ninth-century Aramaic inscription discovered recently at Tel Dan in Israel that refers to the kingdom of Judah as ‘the house of David’).

The earliest evidence for the Canaanite branch comes, surprisingly, from a group of texts written in Akkadian. These are cuneiform tablets dating to the early fourteenth century BCE, found in Egypt at the site of el-Amarna, which was the capital of the heretic pharaoh Akhenaton (Amenophis IV). The el-Amarna archive of nearly four hundred texts is part of the diplomatic correspondence of that pharaoh and his immediate predecessor and successors. Some of the letters are to other great powers of the period, such as Babylonia and Hatti, but the majority are letters from and to Egypt’s vassal cities in Syria–Palestine, such as Ashkelon, Beirut, Byblos, Gezer, Jerusalem, and Shechem. The letters from the vassals in Canaan exhibit a very peculiar form of language: most of the vocabulary is Akkadian, but the morphology and the syntax, that is, the grammar, of the tablets is Canaanite. For example, for ‘I wrote,’ the Akkadian was normally *ašpur*, whereas the Canaanite of this period was *katabtī*; but in the el-Amarna letters from Canaan the scribes usually wrote the Akkadian verb in the Canaanite pattern, that is, *šapartī*. There are also a few purely

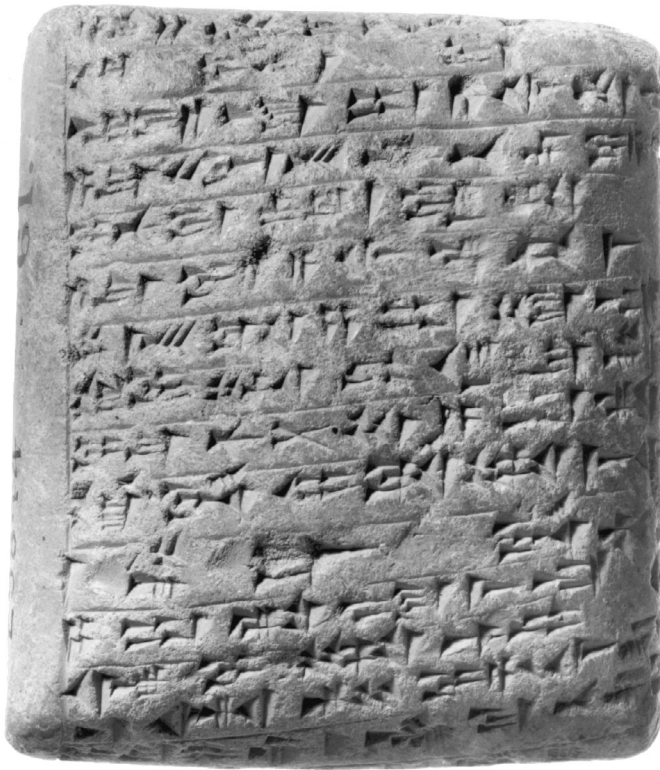


Figure 27.3 An Amarna tablet from Jerusalem. Copyright British Museum.

Canaanite words sprinkled among the texts. Thus a significant amount of information about early Canaanite, several centuries before the earliest known truly Canaanite document, can be extracted from these texts.

Recently excavations at the site of Ashkelon uncovered a small cuneiform fragment, from about the same period as the el-Amarna letters, that turned out to be part of a lexical (dictionary) tablet. Such lexical texts in Mesopotamia normally have two columns, a Sumerian column and an Akkadian column that provides glosses for the Sumerian words. The Ashkelon fragment, however, has an extra column giving translations also into a local Canaanite dialect.

HEBREW

The name of the language

It was noted above that in modern usage the word ‘Canaanite’ as a linguistic term refers to the close-knit subgroup of Northwest Semitic that consists of Hebrew and the other languages of ancient Canaan. In the Bible, what is now called ‘Hebrew’ is similarly referred to as ‘the speech of Canaan’ (*špāt knaʿan*; Isaiah 19:18). In the biblical passage concerning the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE, the Hebrew of the kingdom of Judah is termed ‘Judahite’ (*yhudit*; 2 Kings 18:26, 28 = Isaiah 36:11, 13). Interestingly, the term ‘Hebrew’ (*ibrit*) is not used of the language in the biblical text.

Hebrew texts

The overwhelming majority of our knowledge of ancient Hebrew is based on the text of the Hebrew Bible. While it is notoriously difficult to date the composition of biblical texts, there is a consensus that the earliest poems in the Bible, such as the Song of Deborah in Judges 5 and the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15, go back to the twelfth century. The latest biblical text, the book of Daniel, was composed about 135 BCE. During this thousand-year period the language underwent many changes. While many of these changes were smoothed over by repeated editorial processes, nevertheless enough distinctive characteristics remain that scholars refer to chronological phases of the biblical language: Archaic Biblical Hebrew, the language of the earliest poetry; Standard Biblical Hebrew, in the period of the monarchy; and Late Biblical Hebrew, in the post-exilic period.

Although it is likely that parts of the Hebrew Bible were first composed as early as the twelfth century, the earliest extant copies of parts of the biblical text are from much later, thus far not before the third century BCE, which is the dating assigned to the oldest manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls (such as a manuscript of the books of Samuel). A dazzling exception has recently come to light on small silver scrolls found in a burial at the site of Ketef Hinnom near the Old City of Jerusalem, in an archaeological context of the mid-seventh to early sixth century BCE; written on the silver surface is the lovely benediction of Numbers 6:24–6.

The inscribed benediction from Ketef Hinnom is but one of over three hundred objects with (usually quite short) inscriptions written in Hebrew that have been



Figure 27.4 An eighth-century BCE ostrakon from Samaria with a Hebrew inscription. Photo courtesy of the Harvard Semitic Museum and the West Semitic Research Project.

found in archaeological excavations of biblical-period sites in Israel. The earliest known Hebrew inscription that is not simply a list of the letters of the alphabet is an eight-line farmer's almanac from Gezer that dates to the late tenth century. Many inscriptions, written in ink on potsherds, are letters, such as those found at Arad, written to a certain individual concerning delivery of staples such as bread and wine; or that to an official from a reaper whose cloak had been stolen; or those from a garrison commander in Lachish. Other inscriptions are receipts, such as a number of ostraca from Samaria, for jars of wine and oil. Still other inscriptions are simply one-word labels, or the name of an individual on a seal.

The language of the inscriptions is essentially the same as that of the Hebrew of the Bible, a fact that ensures that Biblical Hebrew is not a relatively late, invented language, as has sometimes been claimed. The inscriptions do, however, provide evidence of small but interesting differences between the dialect of the northern kingdom of Israel (sometimes called Israelian) and that of the southern kingdom of Judah (Judahite). In Judahite, for example, as in the Hebrew of the biblical text, 'house' and 'wine' are written *byt* and *yyn*, respectively, indicating a pronunciation with a diphthong *-ay-* in the middle of the words, *bayt* and *yayn* (biblical Hebrew *bayit* and *yayin*), whereas in Israelian the middle *y* does not appear, thus *bt* and *yn*, indicating that the diphthong *-ay-* has contracted to a single vowel, so that the words were probably pronounced *bêt* and *yên* in the northern kingdom. In biblical Hebrew the word 'year' is written *šnh* and pronounced *šnɔ*, but in Israelian inscriptions it is written *št*, and was probably pronounced *šatt*.

Hebrew is written from right to left in an alphabet of twenty-three characters. The alphabet, including the shapes of the letters, was borrowed from the Phoenicians to the north of Israel. Developments in the shapes of the letters occurred, so that the writing of Hebrew inscriptions has a discrete appearance that distinguishes it from the alphabetic writing of Israel's neighbors. After the fall of Jerusalem, however, the Hebrew script slowly died out and was replaced by a script used to write Aramaic. Thus the letters that are traditionally considered to be 'Hebrew' are in fact Aramaic shapes.



Figure 27.5 A page of the Leningrad Codex of the Hebrew Bible (fol. 6v = Genesis 11:6–12:1). Photo Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman, in collaboration with the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center. Courtesy the Russian National Library (Saltykov-Shchedrin).

The characters of the Hebrew alphabet represent consonants, some of which, however, are also used to indicate vowels, namely, *w* for the vowels *o* and *u*, *y* for the vowels *i* and *e*, and *h* at the end of a word for the vowels *o*, *e*, and *e*. In the earliest inscriptions, vowels were indicated only when at the ends of words. Later, long vowels were also sometimes indicated within words. But during the biblical period and for many centuries thereafter, most vowels were not normally indicated; they were easily supplied by the reader from his or her knowledge of the language. As Hebrew died out as a spoken language, to be replaced by Aramaic during the last centuries BCE, knowledge of the pronunciation of Hebrew among the laymen, who were expected to read aloud biblical passages during the weekly synagogue services, became more and more precarious. Thus a means had to be found to denote the vowels along with the consonants. Since the consonantal text of the Bible had by then been fixed, and was regarded as unchangeable, the vowels were indicated by diacritical marks, called points, that were placed below and above the consonants after which they were to be pronounced. Several such vowel pointing systems are known. The earliest, called the Palestinian, is known from a large number of manuscript fragments, the earliest of which date to the sixth century CE. Another system was used by Babylonian Jews beginning in the seventh century. In the end, however, only one system prevailed, a complex, comprehensive system devised by scribes in and around Tiberias in Galilee, and therefore known as the Tiberian vocalization, which is first attested at the end of the eighth century, and with which the biblical text has been adorned almost exclusively since the tenth century.

Between the writing down of the first biblical texts in the consonantal alphabet and the appearance of the vocalization systems, then, many centuries had elapsed, during which time the pronunciation of Hebrew, like that of any other language, continued to change. Thus, the vowel system of Tiberian Hebrew does not reflect the pronunciation of the biblical texts at the times they were written. A few sources provide some evidence for the pronunciation of Hebrew some centuries earlier than the vowel systems. These are transcriptions of Hebrew words, and sometimes even whole verses, into the Greek and Latin alphabets. The earliest such transcriptions are found in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible begun in the third century BCE; in the Septuagint, place names and personal names, which, as was noted above, were usually meaningful Hebrew words and phrases, were simply transcribed, so that at least an indication of their pronunciation at that time has been preserved.

Summary of Biblical Hebrew grammar

Hebrew has twenty-three consonants. Six of these have two pronunciations each, a hard (stop) pronunciation (indicated by a dot in the letter, called *dagesh*) and a soft (spirant). Five of the letters have special forms that are used when they are the last letter in a word.

Consonant	Trans- literation	Pronunciation
א	ʾ	glottal stop, as in 'uh-oh'
ב	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>
בּ	<i><u>b</u></i>	<i>v</i>
ג	<i>g</i>	<i>g</i> as in 'get'
גּ	<i>ḡ</i>	as in French <i>r</i>
ד	<i>d</i>	<i>d</i>
דּ	<i><u>d</u></i>	as <i>th</i> in 'then'
ה	<i>h</i>	<i>h</i>
ו	<i>w</i>	<i>w</i>
ז	<i>z</i>	<i>z</i> (originally, <i>dz</i>)
ח	<i>ḥ</i>	like <i>ch</i> in Scottish <i>loch</i> , German <i>Bach</i> (originally, a voiceless <i>h</i> pronounced in the pharynx of the throat)
ט	<i>t</i>	<i>t</i> (originally, <i>t</i> plus glottal stop)
י	<i>y</i>	<i>y</i>
כ, final ך	<i>k</i>	<i>k</i>
כּ, final ךּ	<i><u>k</u></i>	like <i>ch</i> in Scottish <i>loch</i> , German <i>Bach</i>
ל	<i>l</i>	<i>l</i>
מ, final ם	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>
נ, final ן	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
ס	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i> (originally, <i>ts</i>)
ש	<i>ṣ</i>	originally, a voiced counterpart to ן (<i>ḥ</i>)
פ	<i>p</i>	<i>p</i>
פּ, final ף	<i>p̄</i>	<i>f</i>
צ, final ץ	<i>ṣ</i>	<i>ts</i> (originally, <i>ts</i> plus glottal stop)
ק	<i>q</i>	<i>k</i> (originally, <i>k</i> plus glottal stop)
ר	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
שׁ	<i>ś</i>	<i>s</i> (originally, an 's'-sound pronounced with air flowing through the side of the mouth, as in Welsh <i>ll</i>)
שׂ	<i>š</i>	<i>sh</i> (originally, <i>s</i>)
ת	<i>t</i>	<i>t</i>
תּ	<i><u>t</u></i>	<i>th</i> as in 'thin'

There are seven vowels, indicated by diacritics above and below the consonantal letters. There is also a sign, called *sheva*, indicating the lack of a vowel (within words; not usually used at the end of a word).

Vowel sign	Trans- literation	Pronunciation	Example
־	<i>a</i>	as in 'back'	שַׁעַר (<i>ša'ar</i>) 'gate'
ֿ	<i>o</i>	as in 'cot'	מֶטֶר <i>meṯor</i> 'rain'
ֿֿ	<i>e</i>	as in 'bet'	לֶחֶם (<i>leḥem</i>) 'bread'
ֿֿֿ (also יֿֿֿ)	<i>e</i>	as in 'they'	גֵּר (<i>ger</i>) 'sojourner'
ֿֿֿֿ (also יֿֿֿֿ)	<i>i</i>	as in 'police'	בִּתִּי (<i>bitti</i>) 'my daughter'
ֿֿֿֿֿ (also יֿֿֿֿֿ)	<i>o</i>	as in 'note'	קוֹל or קוֹל (<i>qol</i>) 'voice'
ֿֿֿֿֿֿ (also יֿֿֿֿֿֿ)	<i>u</i>	as in 'soup'	יָקוּמוּ or יָקוּמוּ (<i>yāqumu</i>) 'they will arise'
ֿֿֿֿֿֿֿ	—	—	סִפְּרִי (<i>siḫri</i>) 'my book'

There are also three ultrashort vowels indicated by a combination of the last sign (*sheva*) and one of the first three vowel signs above.

Doubled consonants are indicated by a *dagesh* (the same dot that marks certain of the consonants as stops or spirants), for example, עַמִּי *'ammi* 'my people.'

The accent or word stress normally falls on the last syllable of a word, as in כָּתַב הָרַב *kaṭāḇ dōḥōr* 'he wrote a word.' Exceptions, such as certain types of nouns and certain verb forms, have the accent on the second-last syllable, as in לֶחֶם *leḥem* 'bread,' יָקוּמוּ *yāqumu* 'they will arise.'

As in other Semitic languages, most nouns and verbs in Hebrew are based on a root of three consonants. The root denotes a basic meaning. Meaningful forms are derived from roots by means of vowel patterns, preformatives, sufformatives, and other devices. An example is the root שֹׁמֵר *š-m-r*, which has to do with 'keeping, watching'; the following forms, among many others, are derived from this root:

שָׁמַר	<i>šamar</i>	'he watched'
יִשְׁמַר	<i>yīšmor</i>	'he will watch'
שׁוֹמֵר	<i>šomer</i>	'watching, watcher'
הִשְׁמַרְי	<i>hiššmri</i>	'watch yourself!'
מִשְׁמַר	<i>mišmor</i>	'prison, watch'
מִשְׁמֶרֶת	<i>mišmeret</i>	'guard, watch'

Nouns occur in two genders, masculine and feminine. Masculine nouns bear no special mark, while most feminine nouns end either in *-a* or in *-t*; examples are

מֶלֶךְ *melek* 'king' and מַלְכָּה *malka* 'queen,' יֹשֵׁב *yošeb* 'male inhabitant' and יוֹשֵׁעֶת *yošelet* 'female inhabitant.' In the plural, masculine nouns usually end in -ים *-im* and feminine nouns in -ות *-ot*: סוס *sus* 'horse,' סוסים *susim* 'horses'; פָּרָה *parā* 'cow,' פָּרוֹת *parot* 'cows.' A dual form, used for precisely two of something, occurs with certain substantives that occur naturally in pairs and certain time words; the dual is indicated by the ending -ים *-ayim*, as in יָד *yad* 'hand,' יָדַיִם *yadayim* '(two) hands'; יוֹם *yom* 'day,' יוֹמַיִם *yomayim* 'two days.'

The definite article, 'the,' has the form of a prefix, ה־ *ha-*, plus the doubling of first consonant of the noun to which it is attached, as in מֶלֶךְ *melek* 'king' and הַמֶּלֶךְ *hammeklek* 'the king.'

Adjectives follow the substantives they modify and agree with them in gender and number; attributive adjectives also agree in definiteness: סוס טוב *sus toḅ* 'good horse,' הסוסים הטובים *bassusim hattōḥim* 'the good horses.'

A characteristic feature of the Semitic languages, including Hebrew, is the juxtaposition of two nouns to express a genitive relationship, as in סוס הַמֶּלֶךְ *sus hammeklek* 'the horse of the king.' Such a juxtaposition is called a 'construct chain,' and the first word is said to be 'in construct' with the second. Many Hebrew nouns undergo sound changes when in construct, since construct forms are unaccented; for example, דָּבָר *dabar* 'word' becomes דְּבַר *ḏbar* when in construct, as in דְּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ *ḏbar hammeklek* 'word of the king.'

Hebrew personal pronouns exhibit a variety of forms, depending on whether they are independent subjects of their sentence (as in 'I am king'), possessive (as in 'my book'), or objects of verbs (as in 'the scribe saw me'). Unlike English, Hebrew distinguishes four forms for the second person ('you'): masculine singular, feminine singular, masculine plural, and feminine plural. Below are the independent forms of the pronouns:

'I'	אֲנִי or אָנֹכִי	ʾanoki or ʾani	'we'	אֲנַחְנוּ	ʾanahnū
'you' masc. sg.	אַתָּה(ה)	ʾattā	'you' masc. pl.	אַתֶּם	ʾattēm
'you' fem. sg.	אַתְּ	ʾatt	'you' fem. pl.	אַתֶּנָּה	ʾattēnā
'he'	הוּא	hū	'they' masc.	הֵם, הַנָּה	hem, hemmā
'she'	הִיא	hī	'they' fem.	הֵנָּה	hemnā

Possessive pronouns are suffixes attached to nouns, as in סוס *sus* 'horse,' סוּסִי *susi* 'my horse,' סוּסָהּ *susāh* 'her horse,' סוּסֵנוּ *susenu* 'our horse.' As in the construct chain, many nouns undergo sound changes when possessive pronoun suffixes are added to them: סֵפֶר *sefer* 'book,' סֵפְרִי *sipri* 'my book'; דָּבָר *dabar* 'word,' דְּבָרוֹ *ḏbarō* 'his word,' דְּבָרְךָ *ḏbarḵen* 'your (fem. pl.) word.'

The forms of the verb constitute easily the most complex part of Hebrew morphology. Each verbal root may occur in several finite and non-finite forms, and in a range of conjugational types.

The basic form of the verb, and the form under which verbal roots are listed in dictionaries of Biblical Hebrew, is the third person, masculine, singular of the finite form traditionally known as the Perfect, which is used to express completed action (usually in the past). For the root שָׁמַר 'watch, keep,' which was cited as an example above, this form is שָׁמַר *šamar* 'he watched.' The paradigm of the Perfect of שָׁמַר *šamar* is as follows:

שָׁמַר	<i>šamar</i>	'he watched'	שָׁמְרוּ	<i>šamru</i>	'they watched'
שָׁמְרָה	<i>šamra</i>	'she watched'			
שָׁמַרְתָּ	<i>šmartā</i>	'you (masc. sg.) watched'	שָׁמַרְתֶּם	<i>šmartem</i>	'you (masc. pl.) watched'
שָׁמַרְתְּ	<i>šmart</i>	'you (fem. sg.) watched'	שָׁמַרְתֶּן	<i>šmarten</i>	'you (fem. pl.) watched'
שָׁמַרְתִּי	<i>šmarti</i>	'I watched'	שָׁמַרְנוּ	<i>šamarnu</i>	'we watched'

The form traditionally called the Imperfect is used for action that is not necessarily completed (present, future, past continuous, various modal nuances):

יִשְׁמַר	<i>yīšmor</i>	'he watches'	יִשְׁמְרוּ	<i>yīšmru</i>	'they (masc.) watch'
תִּשְׁמַר	<i>tīšmor</i>	'she watches'	תִּשְׁמְרוּ	<i>tīšmro</i>	'they (fem.) watch'
תִּשְׁמַרְתָּ	<i>tīšmartā</i>	'you (masc. sg.) watch'	תִּשְׁמַרְתֶּם	<i>tīšmartem</i>	'you (masc. pl.) watch'
תִּשְׁמַרְתְּ	<i>tīšmart</i>	'you (fem. sg.) watch'	תִּשְׁמַרְתֶּן	<i>tīšmarten</i>	'you (fem. pl.) watch'
אֶשְׁמַר	<i>ʾešmor</i>	'I watch'	נִשְׁמַר	<i>nišmor</i>	'we watch'

In addition to the Perfect and the Imperfect, other finite forms of the verb are the Imperative ('watch!'), the Cohortative (first person only, as in 'let me/us watch,' 'I/we would watch'), and Jussive ('may he watch,' 'let him watch'). When a special form of the conjunction — וּ *w-* 'and', namely, — וַ *wa-* (plus doubling of the following consonant), is added to the Jussive, a narrative preterite is formed, as in יָבֵן *yibēn* 'let him build,' וַיָּבֵן *wayyibēn* 'and he built'; this is the most common type of finite verb in the biblical text. Nonfinite forms of verbal roots include the participle, as in שֹׁמֵר *šomer* 'watching, watcher'; two infinitives, שָׁמַר *šmor* 'to watch' and שָׁמֹר *šmor* (the latter used mostly adverbially to emphasize a finite verb).

The verbal forms listed in the preceding paragraphs are said to be in the *Qal*, or simple, conjugation, because, apart from the vowels and affirmatives that indicate person and aspect or tense, no other augmentation of the root occurs. Most verbs, however, also occur in other conjugations that are denoted by specific augments;

these conjugations alter the meaning of the verb in fairly well-defined ways. The main conjugations, besides the *Qal*, are the following:

Conjugation	Characteristic	Meaning	Example
<i>Niphal</i>	prefixed –נ n-	passive, reflexive	<i>Qal</i> שָׁמַר 'watch,' <i>Niphal</i> נִשְׁמַר 'be watched, watch oneself'
<i>Piel</i>	doubling of middle consonant	factive and others	<i>Qal</i> שָׁלַם <i>šalem</i> 'be whole,' <i>Piel</i> שִׁלַּם <i>šillel</i> 'make whole'
<i>Pual</i>	<i>Piel</i> with vowels u–a	passive of <i>Piel</i>	שֻׁלַּם <i>šullam</i> 'be made whole'
<i>Hiphal</i>	prefixed –ה h-	causative	<i>Qal</i> מָלַךְ <i>mlak</i> 'rule,' <i>Hiphal</i> הִמְלִיךְ <i>himlik</i> 'cause to rule, make king'
<i>Hophal</i>	<i>Hiphal</i> with vowels o–a	passive of <i>Hiphal</i>	הִמְלִיךְ <i>hmlak</i> 'be caused to rule'
<i>Hithpael</i>	prefixed –הִת hit-	reflexive and others	<i>Qal</i> נָשָׂא <i>naśa</i> 'raise,' <i>Hithpael</i> הִתְנַשֵּׂא <i>hitnaśse</i> 'raise, exalt oneself'

The morphology of the verb is further complicated by the existence of many so-called 'weak roots,' roots in which one or more of the three consonants undergo sound changes.

The normal word order of a Hebrew sentence is Verb–Subject–Adjunct (the latter being an object, an adverb, or a prepositional phrase). A few biblical sentences conclude this very brief overview of Hebrew grammar.

Genesis 11:7:

הָבָה גִּרְדָּה וְנִבְלָה שֵׁם שְׁפָתָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שְׁפַת רֵעֵהוּ:

hāḇāh nerḏā wnəḇlā šēm špātām 'ašer lō' yišm'u 'iṣ špāt rē'ehū

come (literally, give) let-us-descend and-let-us-confuse there speech-their
which not they-will-hear man speech-of companion-his

'Come, let us descend and confuse their speech there, so that they will not understand each other's speech.'

Numbers 6:24–6:

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ: ²⁴

yḇrēkkə yāhwe wyišmrək

may-he-bless-you Yahweh and-may-he-keep-you

יְאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּחַנֶּךָ: ²⁵

yər yāhwe pənaw `elək wiḥunnēkk

may-he-make-shine Yahweh face-his toward-you and-may-he-favor-you

יֵשָׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיֵּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם: ²⁶

yisśaw yāhwe pənaw `elək wyōśem lk šlom

may-he-raise Yahweh face-his toward-you and may-he-set for-you peace

‘May Yahweh bless and keep you; may he shine his face upon you and favor you; may he look upon you and give you peace.’

2 Kings 18:26:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלִיקִים בֶּן־חִלְקִיָּהוּ וְשִׁבְנָה וַיּוֹאֶחַ אֶל־רַב־שָׁקֵה דְּבַר־נָא אֶל־עַבְדֶּיךָ אֲרָמִית
כִּי שָׁמָעִים אָנֹחֲנוּ וְאֶל־תְּדַבֵּר עִמָּנוּ יְהוּדִית בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַחֹמָה:

*wayyōmer `elyāqim ben-ḥilqiyāhu wšēḇnə wyō`əḥ `el-rab-šəqe dabber-nə`
`el-`aḥdēkk `aromit ki šom'im `anəḥnu w'al-tḏabber `imḡonu ybudit b'ozne
ḥōm `ašer `al-ḥōm*

and-he-said Eliakim son-of-Hilkiah and-Shebnah and-Joah to-(the)-
Rab-shakeh speak-then to-servants-your Aramaic for hearing we and-not-
you-speak with-us Judahite in-ears-of the-people which on-the-wall

‘Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, and Shebnah and Joah said to the
Rab-shakeh, “Speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand (it);
do not speak with us in Judahite within the hearing of the people on
the wall.”’

Isaiah 19:18:

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיוּ חֲמֵשׁ עָרִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מְדַבְּרוֹת שְׁפַת כְּנָעַן וְנִשְׁבָּעוֹת לַיהוָה
צְבָאוֹת עִיר הַהֵרֶס יֹאמַר לְאַחַת:

*bayyom habu' yibyu ḥəmeš `arim b'ereš mišrayim mḏabbrot špāt kna'an wnišbōt
lyāhwe šḥōt `ir ḥaberes yešmer l'ēḥōt*

in-the-day the-that they-will-be five cities in-land-of Egypt speaking
speech-of Canaan and-swearing to-Yahweh (of) hosts city-of the-
destruction it-will-be-said for-one

‘On that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt speaking Canaanite and swearing themselves to Yahweh of hosts; one of them will be called “the City of Destruction.”’

Post-biblical forms of Hebrew

In addition to the chronological developments mentioned above, Hebrew as spoken in the biblical period undoubtedly comprised a number of regional dialects as well, one of which is revealed in the inscriptions written in the northern kingdom of Israel. A few dialectal peculiarities are also attested in the biblical text itself, although most of these were smoothed over by later editors to conform to a standard dialect, probably that of Jerusalem. In the post-biblical period, Hebrew was also the language in which the Mishnah was written. Mishnaic (or Rabbinic) Hebrew exhibits a number of significant differences from the standard biblical language, and is probably not a direct linguistic continuation of the latter, but rather reflects a different dialect, the origins of which are not yet entirely clear. On the other hand, the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls, including that of the nonbiblical manuscripts, is relatively close

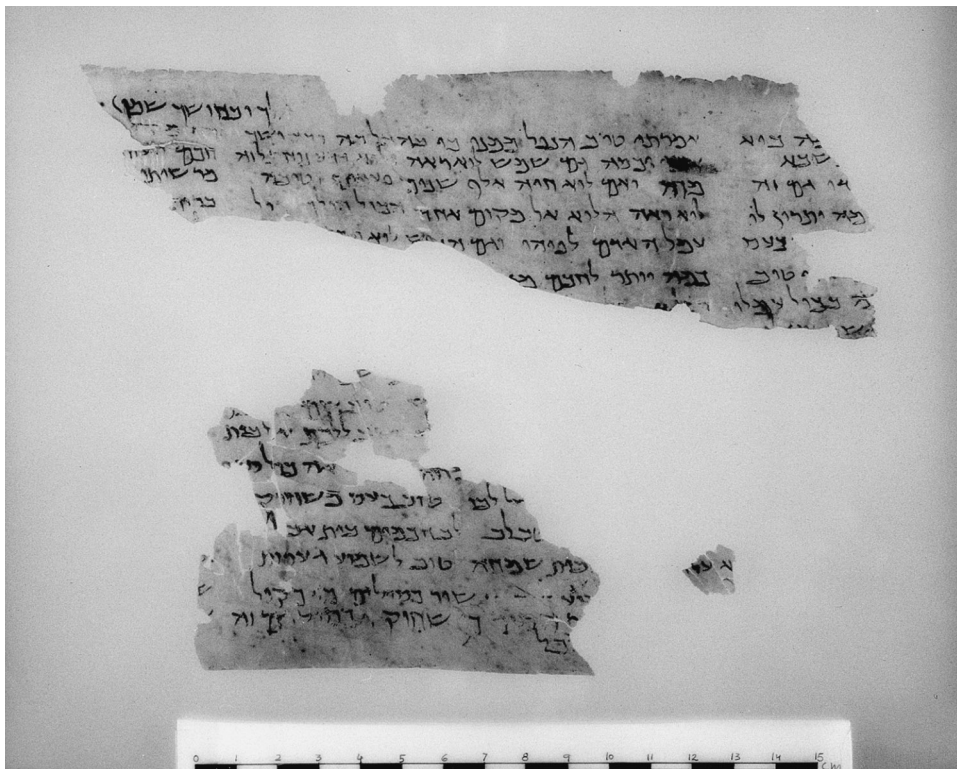


Figure 27.6 A fragment of a text from Qumran (4Q109 Qohelet a = Ecclesiastes). Photo Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman, West Semitic Research, Courtesy Department of Antiquities.

to biblical Hebrew, and probably reflects a deliberate attempt to reproduce the latter in a time when it was no longer spoken. Another form of Hebrew was written, in a descendant of the original Hebrew script, by the Samaritans. In the Middle Ages Hebrew continued to be used in the Near East and in Europe as the written language of an extensive literature. Modern Israeli Hebrew was created in the late nineteenth century on the basis of both Biblical and later dialects, with vocabulary drawn from all periods of the language; this revival of a language that had died out as a native tongue is unique in the world's history.

ARAMAIC

The vast majority of the 'Hebrew Bible' is indeed written in Hebrew. There are, however, a very small number of passages that are written instead in Aramaic; these are Ezra 4:8–6:18 and 7:12–26; Daniel 2:4–7:28; Jeremiah 10:11; and two words in Genesis 31:47. The reason or reasons for the presence of Aramaic in the biblical text have been the subject of scholarly debate. In the book of Ezra it is likely that the author, in using the correspondence of the royal Persian court as source material, retained the original Aramaic of the latter, and also employed Aramaic between the letters to lend an air of authenticity to the narration. In the book of Daniel, too, the use of Aramaic probably reflects an attempt at authenticity in the presentation of the speech of foreigners.

In our review of the Semitic languages above, it was seen that Aramaic is a member of the Northwest Semitic branch, and thus a relatively close cousin of Hebrew. Aramaic first appears in inscriptions from the early first millennium BCE, and it continues to be spoken to the present day. In this long period, a wide range of dialects is attested. The earliest inscription discovered thus far is a long bilingual text (the other language being Akkadian) on a statue of a Syrian potentate dating to the mid-ninth century BCE. This and a number of other inscriptions from the ninth through the sixth centuries are referred to collectively as Old Aramaic, although already dialectal differences are evident. When the Persian king Cyrus conquered the Near East in the latter half of the sixth century, Aramaic was already widely spoken across much of his realm. (Note the plea of the Jerusalem officials to the Assyrian Rab-shakeh in 2 Kings 18:26, cited above, that he speak Aramaic with them.) Recognizing this, Cyrus and his successors made Aramaic one of the official languages of their empire. This official status had two significant effects on Aramaic: first, a fairly standardized form of the language came to be used throughout the empire; and, second, the language, especially in this standardized form, called variously Imperial or Official Aramaic, came to be even more commonly spoken and written. Many Official Aramaic texts written on papyrus have been found in Palestine and Egypt. The Biblical Aramaic of the passages of Ezra is also an example of Official Aramaic.

Following the fall of the Persian Empire to Alexander, Aramaic continued to be widely spoken and written throughout the Near East. The period from the third century BCE through the second century CE is the Middle Aramaic stage. Many texts in a number of distinct dialects are attested from this time, including the texts and dialects of Hatra, of Palmyra, and of the Nabataeans. The dialect of the city of Edessa

(Urfa), which came to be known as Syriac, also first appears in this period. In addition, a Standard Literary Aramaic, based largely on the earlier Official dialect, is attested in a large number of writings, including the Biblical Aramaic of the book of Daniel, the Aramaic of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the early Aramaic Targums (translations of the Bible). Other Aramaic documents from this time have been found from Egypt to Afghanistan.

From the third century CE on is the period called Late Aramaic, which exhibits enough linguistic variation to be classified into three branches: Late Eastern Aramaic, Syriac, and Late Western Aramaic. Late Eastern Aramaic comprises Mandaic, the language of the Mandaeans of southern Mesopotamia and adjacent Iran, a very small group of whom continue to speak Mandaic as a native language to the present day; and Babylonian Jewish Aramaic, the language of the large corpus of the Babylonian Talmud. Syriac, which was, as noted above, based on the Aramaic dialect of Edessa, is the language of the eastern church; a vast Syriac literature is preserved, dating from the fourth through the thirteenth centuries. The descendants of dialects akin to Syriac continued to be spoken in the vicinity of Kurdistan until the twentieth century; most of the roughly two hundred thousand speakers have now dispersed to other countries, including Armenia, Georgia, Germany, Israel, Russia, Sweden, and the United States. Late Western Aramaic is known from a number of dialects: Galilean (or Jewish) Palestinian Aramaic, in which are written the Palestinian Talmud, Midrashim, and Targums; the Aramaic dialect of the Samaritans; and Judean Aramaic (also known as Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Syro-Palestinian, or Palestinian Syriac), the dialect of the early Palestinian Christians, and probably the dialect of Jesus and that reflected in the few Aramaic forms preserved in the New Testament (for example, two words spoken by Jesus in Mark 5:41, Greek *ταλιθα κουμι* for Aramaic *טַלְיָתָא קוּמִי* *ṭalyṭā qumi* 'young girl, arise'; an invocation at the end of one of Paul's letters, 1 Corinthians 16:22, Greek *μαρκαναθά* for Aramaic *מָרְנָן אָתָּא* *maran ʾāṭā* 'our lord, come'). A remnant of Late Western Aramaic continues to be spoken in three small villages near Damascus.

Aramaic differs from Hebrew in a number of significant features. In its phonology, for example, Aramaic is characterized by the reduction of Proto-Semitic short vowels in open syllables, whereas in Hebrew these are frequently preserved and modified. Aramaic has preserved the Proto-Semitic long vowel *ā* essentially unchanged while in Hebrew it has become *o*. While Hebrew and Aramaic have roughly the same consonants, some of the consonants in both languages reflect the merging of two or more Proto-Semitic consonants; those mergings were quite different in the two languages, however. These differences may be illustrated by a few examples. Because of the limited corpus and vocabulary of Biblical Aramaic, the Aramaic forms have been taken from Syriac:

	Aramaic	Hebrew
'three'	<i>tlāṭ</i>	שְׁלוֹשׁ (שלוש)
'my land'	<i>ʿarʿi</i>	אַרְצִי (אֶרֶץ)
'gold'	<i>dhah</i>	זָהָב (זהב)

Naturally there are many other differences between Hebrew and Aramaic, including the forms of pronouns, the declension of the noun, and the types of conjugation in which verbs may occur.

It was noted above that the Aramaic of Ezra is a form of Official Aramaic. Indeed, some of the Aramaic passages, such as the correspondence with king Artaxerxes, read as though they are nearly verbatim copies of ancient Aramaic letters to and from the Persian court. A sample passage concludes this section:

Ezra 4:17:

פִּתְנָמָא שְׁלַח מַלְכָּא עַל־רְחוּם בְּעַל־טִעָם וְשִׁמְשַׁי סִפְרָא וְשָׂאֵר כְּנֻזְחֻזִּין דִּי יְהוּבִין
בְּשִׁמְרִין וְשָׂאֵר עַבְר־נְהָרָה שְׁלָם וְכָעֵת:

*pitṭnmā šlah malkā ʿal-rḥūm bʿel-ṭʿem wšimšay sṣprā ušʿar knwzḥzḥon di yḥbzḥn
bšmrṣyḥn ušʿar ʿabar-nabʿar šlm ukē et*

message-the he-sent king-the to-Rehum lord-of-decree and-Shimshai
scribe-the and-rest-of associates-their which living in-Samaria and-rest-of
beyond-river peace and-now

‘The king sent a message: “To Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their associates living in Samaria and the rest of Beyond-the-River: Greetings. Now . . .”’

WRITING AND THE ALPHABET

Hebrew and Aramaic use a form of the alphabet that they borrowed from the Phoenicians. We know that both borrowed the alphabet from elsewhere because the alphabet they use is not an exact match for the consonant repertoire in either Hebrew or early Aramaic; further, the letter names that we know from Hebrew and Aramaic actually correspond to the pronunciation of those words in Phoenician, another clue that the source script was Phoenician.

The earliest inscriptions using this alphabet date from about 1800 BCE, but the earliest extensive body of material comes from Serabit al-Khadem in the Sinai peninsula, written by Canaanite-speaking miners working the Egyptian turquoise mines there. These ‘Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions’ date from about 1500; they are largely religious in nature – votive inscriptions or prayers – and include, for instance, *lbʿlt* ‘for the lady’ (presumably the Egyptian goddess Hathor, since some of the inscriptions were found on objects in the Hathor temple), and *bnd ʿbt* [*m*] *tn nt[n]* [*l*] ʿl ‘this is what ʿAḥta has given as a gift [to] El.’

When we speak of the ‘alphabet’ that was invented in the second millennium, we are referring to consonants only. The alphabet operated according to the acrophonic principle: drawing a picture to represent the first consonant of the word the picture represents, as in rebus writing (drawing a door to represent /d/ and a bee to represent /b/, and so on). In this alphabet the original *b* was a picture of a house because the Canaanite word for house, *bayt*, begins with the *b*-sound; (‘palm of) hand’

Pictograph	Object Depicted	Name	Sound Value	Early Phoenician Form	Hebrew/Aramaic Form	Hebrew Name
	house	<i>bêt</i>	<i>b</i>			<i>beṭ</i>
	throwstick	<i>gaml</i>	<i>g</i>			<i>gimel</i>
	forearm	<i>yad</i>	<i>y</i>			<i>yoḏ</i>
	palm of hand	<i>kapp</i>	<i>k</i>			<i>kaṭ</i>
	water	<i>mêm</i>	<i>m</i>			<i>mem</i>
	head	<i>raš</i>	<i>r</i>			<i>reš</i>
	mark	<i>taww</i>	<i>t</i>			<i>ṭaw</i>

Figure 27.7 Examples of early alphabetic pictographs, illustrating the acrophonic principle.

is *kapp*, a word that begins with the *k*-sound, and so the *k* is a picture of a hand. Some speaker(s) of a Canaanite language probably adapted a principle similar to the one at use in one group of Egyptian hieroglyphs – those that represent one consonant only. These Canaanites would have been familiar with Egyptian writing, but they realized what the Egyptians did not: that there was no need for the more complicated Egyptian syllable-signs or word-signs. Instead, each of the original 27 or 28 symbols represented a distinct consonantal phoneme. The result was revolutionary: completely pictographic writing requires a picture for every word (or group of words similar in meaning); syllabic writing uses one sign for /bi/ and a different sign for /ib/, and still another for /bib/, so that hundreds of signs are needed to spell out all the words of a language; this early alphabet, however, consisted of 27–28 letters only, easy enough to learn in a day for anyone with a need for writing.

Between 1600 and 1000 the alphabet continued to develop. Whereas the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions were written both vertically and horizontally, very shortly the horizontal came to predominate. A given early inscription could be written from right to left or from left to right, and some were even written *boustrophedon*, or ‘as the ox ploughs’ (that is, alternating left-to-right and right-to-left), but by 1000 the direction of writing had stabilized right-to-left. Since several of the pictographs changed stance to reflect the direction of writing, when the latter stabilized, so did the stance of the letters.

Already by the eleventh century, virtually all of the pictograph forms had developed into stylized ‘linear’ descendants. This linear Phoenician script is used through the first millennium to write Phoenician and Punic, and even neo-Punic (post-146 BCE) inscriptions, but the Hebrew and Aramaic scripts had begun to follow separate paths by the tenth century. The first inscription we have in a clearly Hebrew script is from Kuntillet Ajrud in the far south, dating around 900. In the Aramaic realm, the Tell Fakhariya inscription of the mid-ninth century from northern Syria is written

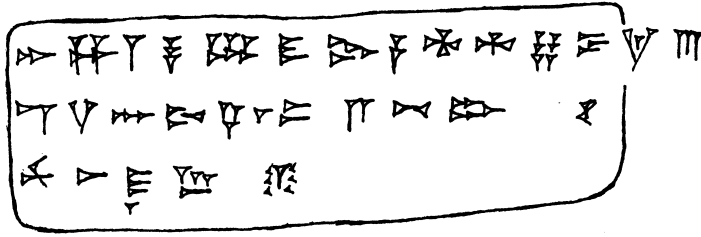


Figure 27.8 A Ugaritic abecedar.

The letters are in the following order:

first row: ʾa b g ḥ d h w z ḥ t y k š l;

second row: m ḏ n z s ʿ p s q r ʿ;

third row: ḡ t ʾi ʾu š

in a peculiar script, somewhat unlike later Aramaic inscriptions, but the contemporary Tel Dan inscription, from much farther south (Dan in northern Israel), is written in a script that is identifiably Aramaic.

Alongside this Canaanite–Phoenician alphabet there was also in use in the same general area a cuneiform alphabet, the ‘Ugaritic’ or ‘Canaanite’ cuneiform alphabet. Found at Ugarit and elsewhere and dating from the fourteenth to twelfth centuries, it consists of the consonants in the Ugaritic language represented not by pictographs but in simple cuneiform (‘wedge-shaped’) characters, impressed left-to-right with a stylus on wet clay tablets. It seems that at least some of the letters in this cuneiform alphabet were drawn to resemble the Canaanite alphabet we have been discussing, which indicates that the cuneiform alphabet is an adaptation of the alphabet ‘idea’ to the clay tablet and cuneiform writing that were very much in use at Ugarit for international correspondence (in the lingua franca, Akkadian).

Archaeologists have also found abecedaries at Ugarit (an abecedar – pronounced ‘a-b-c-dary’ – is a writing of the alphabet in the order in which it is learned and memorized), and they show us the order of the Ugaritic alphabet: ʾa, b, g, ḥ, d, h, w, z, ḥ, t, y, k, š, l, m, ḏ, n, z, s, ʿ, p, s, q, r, t, ḡ, t, ʾi, ʾu, š.

This order is familiar to us from the Hebrew and Aramaic alphabets, but with more signs interspersed since Ugaritic used 27 different consonants, more than Hebrew or Aramaic. (The last three letters are add-ons.) A simplified cuneiform writing system – and a reduced consonant repertoire of 22 – is also known to us from a very few inscriptions, written right-to-left, from such Canaanite sites as Taanach, Sarepta, and Beth Shemesh, and three from Ugarit itself. An unexpected find at Ugarit, however, has been copies of Ugaritic cuneiform abecedaries with a radically different letter order: ḥ, l, ḥ, m, q, w, t, r, b, t, ḏ, š, k, n, ḥ, s, s, p, ʿ, ʿ, z, g, d, ḡ, t, z, y. Remarkably, this is the order of the alphabet in Old South Arabian and in Ethiopic, the so-called *South Semitic* order. Those who developed the South Semitic script clearly borrowed this alternative ordering of the alphabet along with the alphabet itself.

The Phoenician alphabet was, of course, the source of the Greek and Latin alphabets. It was the Greeks who developed the first full system of vowel signs, by utilizing some of the earlier alphabetic signs for consonants that were not part of Greek (*ayin*,

for instance – first an eye with pupil, then a circle with a dot, then a plain circle – is not pronounced in Greek, but was used for Greek *omicron* instead). There are Greek alphabetic inscriptions by the eighth century, but the antiquity of some Greek letter forms and the amount of development beyond Phoenician forms suggest a long period of contact between Phoenicians and the West before the final form of the Greek alphabet emerged. There is, for instance, a fragment of a Phoenician inscription found in Nora on Sardinia that dates to the eleventh century, and another Nora inscription from the ninth century. So there is no doubt the Phoenicians and the Greek world had an extended period of contact, at least three centuries, in fact, before the date of the first-known Greek inscriptions. All of these features argue for a complicated and extended process of the Greeks borrowing their alphabet from the Phoenicians, rather than one date that can be proposed as the moment of transmission.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE GREEK LANGUAGE



John Muddiman

INTRODUCTION

Alexander the Great constructed his vast empire on the force of Greek arms and the power of the Greek language. The linguistic dominion lasted much longer than the military one, for armies capture only territory: language colonizes the mind. It is appropriate therefore in this section, devoted to the institutions of the biblical world, that the chapter on biblical languages should precede the one on warfare.

Greek belongs to the great swathe of Indo-European languages and is one of the oldest for which documentary evidence survives. *Ancient* (Mycenaean) Greek was written in a syllabic script (known to scholarship as Linear B), with some ninety-odd characters. That complicated system, and with it literacy itself, disappeared with the fall of Mycenae in the twelfth century BCE. Four hundred years later the Greek language was encoded afresh in a very different sort of alphabet, borrowed from the Phoenicians. It had, like Hebrew, signs for each consonant, but extra symbols for vowels as well. This modification of the writing system was a dramatic improvement. Having lost the art of writing for so long, Greek culture recovered it in a flexible and efficient form that was to contribute significantly to the promotion of literacy, education, science and literature in the ancient and modern worlds.

In the following four hundred years, *Classical* Greek, though written in the same alphabet, was spoken in a variety of different accents and dialects: principally Doric, spoken in Southern Greece; Aeolic, spoken in Boeotia and Thessaly; and Ionic, which was used along the Eastern coast of the Aegean. Closely related to the latter was Attic, the dialect spoken in the territory of Athens. Colonization by the Greek city-states spread these different dialects in a patchwork across the Mediterranean world, from Southern France, across Italy, and Sicily and to the East into Turkey. But the cultural and political hegemony of fifth-century Athens made Attic the gold-standard of educated speech. It was adopted by the court of Philip of Macedon to underline his imperial pretensions, and spread by his son's whirlwind military successes. Greek unified the chain of command in army and government. It facilitated trade and stimulated local economies. Greek-speaking cities, with all the outward appurtenances of Greek culture, theatre, temples and gymnasia, sprouted across the conquered territories, including Syria–Palestine. The effect of this

expansion on the Greek language was to reverse, in part, the natural tendency of language to diversify, and to bring about convergence, simplification and clarity at the cost of subtlety and grandeur. A new form of Greek was beginning to evolve.

HELLENISTIC GREEK

Greeks defined non-Greeks on linguistic rather than other grounds: they called them barbarians; that is, those who babble (see Homer, *Iliad* 2.867: the word only gained the sense it has in English of ‘uncivilized and aggressive’ after the Persian War). Language was felt to be a more significant factor in Greek identity than either ethnicity or political association. The verb from which the adjective ‘Hellenistic’ derives (*hellēnizō*) means literally ‘I speak Greek’. This linguistic sense is reflected in New Testament usage: at Acts 6.1 ‘Hellenists’ means Greek-speaking Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem; and at Acts 9.29 it refers to Greek-speaking Jewish opponents of Paul. The latter reference clearly indicates that no other supposed characteristic of ‘Hellenistic’ Judaism, for example, less strict observance of Torah or reservations about the Temple cult, is implied.

Hellenistic Greek is common (*koinē*) Greek in both senses of the word: universal and vulgar. It merges with classical Attic at the upper end of the scale of literary composition and reaches down to a subliterate level at which all the rules of grammar may be ignorantly violated. But in between lies a spectrum of broadly homogeneous or at least mutually comprehensible forms of the language, within which are to be found at different points the books of the Greek Bible. Hellenistic Greek is also a language in rapid evolution slowed only (for the educated) by the pull of classical masterpieces like the works of Plato or Demosthenes. Its main characteristics may be summarized briefly, as long as it is remembered that they encroached upon earlier forms only gradually and unevenly.

Koine eroded the differences between the dialects, with Attic forms usually predominating except where its forms were notably eccentric: ‘Hellenistic language is thus by and large a compromise between the claim of the strongest and that of the majority’ (BDF s.3). Because the literature of classical Athens continued to exercise enormous influence among the intelligentsia in the Hellenistic age, its forms did not disappear altogether and they were periodically revived. There was a distinct ‘atticizing’ movement in the late second century CE and another in the fourth. When atticisms occur among the variant readings of the Greek Bible, therefore, we have to ask whether they are residual, or secondary ‘improvements’ introduced by the scribes (Kilpatrick 1963).

The need for unambiguous communication between speakers for one or both of whom Greek was a second language produced simplification. Literary refinements in style or vocabulary that make no difference to the intended sense would have been a waste of effort. So, for example, the dual and optative forms of the verb fall out of regular use. Periphrastic formulations (i.e. auxiliary plus participle) begin to encroach on proper inflection. Particles, indicating the precise logical connection between one sentence and the next – the glory of classical Greek – are substituted by simple ‘and’ or ‘but’, and parataxis increases at the expense of subordinate clauses. Direct speech is preferred to indirect. The varied ways of expressing purpose are

reduced to one standard idiom. Irregular nouns and verbs are forced to conform, and there is a steady decline in the use of the superlative adjective and of prepositions that govern the dative and genitive cases.

At the same time, the drive for clarity also produces redundancy for the sake of emphasis. Compound verbs (with prepositional prefixes) are preferred to their simple forms. Similar but subtly differentiated words become mere synonyms and are doubled up to ensure the message gets across. Pronouns are added even though they are strictly unnecessary since that information is already conveyed in the inflected form of the verb. Even the increased preference for diminutive forms can be seen as a form of emphasis, by understatement.

The pronunciation of koine varied significantly between speakers of different native tongues. Josephus, the Jewish historian, who wrote in a refined atticizing style, nevertheless confessed that he never managed to rid himself of his Semitic accent (*Antiquities* 20.263). One result of change in pronunciation was the reduction in the subtle differences between vowels and diphthongs in spoken koine. This can be traced by confusions in the textual tradition (since manuscripts were often copied from dictation); for example the pronouns we (*hēmeis*) and you (*hymeis*) would have been indistinguishable when spoken.

As a living language of international communication, Hellenistic Greek is not straightforwardly recoverable from literary remains. Most of the literature of the period is more conservative and 'classicizing'. But there are exceptions, like the discourses of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, and indeed the New Testament itself, which come closer to the forms of koine as it was spoken. This conclusion was confirmed when a stock of non-literary Egyptian papyri came to light towards the end of the nineteenth century (Deissmann 1927; see further below).

THE SEPTUAGINT

The translation of the books of the Hebrew Bible into Greek was a long process that began in the third century BCE with the Pentateuch and continued into the early Christian period. The large Jewish community in Alexandria had been 'Hellenized' to such an extent that many were no longer able to understand their sacred writings in the original. For purposes of worship, exegesis and legal debate they needed a full translation, and not just an *ad hoc* rendering (or *targum*) of the Hebrew.

The translation that resulted is known as the Septuagint (LXX) because of the legendary account of its origins given in the so-called *Letter of Aristeas* (Charlesworth 1983). That book purports to have been written by a Gentile in the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus II (285–247 BCE) and tells how the king ordered a translation of the laws of the Jews to be made for the Royal Library, by bringing seventy (or seventy-two) learned elders from Jerusalem who completed the work faultlessly in as many days. Later tradition added the detail that each of these scholars worked independently on the whole text of the Bible, and their translations turned out, miraculously, to be identical.

The Aristeas romance is clearly a piece of Jewish propaganda for the authority of the Septuagint, quashing any doubts on that score that arise from its frequent omissions, variations and additions *vis-à-vis* the Hebrew. By the end of the second

century BCE (Sirach, Prologue) the prophetic and other books had been added to the growing corpus.

The translation Greek of the LXX is quite varied even within the Pentateuch itself. In some instances (2 Kings) it is slavishly literal, in others (parts of 1 Kings) it is free to the point of paraphrase. Certain books, like Proverbs and Job, achieve a degree of literary artistry that even improves on their originals. With translations, some grammatical structures and specialized vocabulary from the originating language are likely to enter the bloodstream of the receiving language. This is especially so when the translation itself goes on to acquire scriptural authority. (Compare the effect of the English Bible in this respect.) Yet, at the same time its sacred 'classic' character is retained by a certain distancing. Thus, in the New Testament, there are both 'domesticated' Septuagintalisms and also, when the Old Testament is actually cited, its 'archaic' idiom and style especially in regard to word-order are deliberately retained.

BIBLICAL GREEK?

Judged by the standards of classical Greek many parts of the Greek Bible, above all perhaps Jeremiah in the Old Testament and Revelation in the New, leave a lot to be desired. Towards the end of the second century CE, with the idea of the plenary inspiration of the sacred text gaining ground, the nature of biblical Greek itself became a topic of theological debate. The apparent infelicities in the text might be explained (Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.62) as God's way of shaming the wisdom of the wise. Or they could be flatly denied and the authoritative scriptures be taken as the arbiter of good taste (Ambrose, *Epistles* 8).

As the first grammars and dictionaries of the Greek Bible were being compiled in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the debate broke out afresh between those who emphasized the importance of Hebraic idioms and the unity of the two Testaments, and those who claimed that the language of inspired scripture must be the purest form of Greek and attempted to adduce parallels to biblical diction from classical sources (see Voetz 1982–8: 897–906).

The breakthrough came in the late nineteenth century with the discovery of koine. The insights of Adolf Deissmann (1909, 1927) were vindicated by the full analysis of the vocabulary (Moulton and Milligan 1930) and syntax (Moulton 1908) of the Greek New Testament compared with non-literary papyri, and new grammars and dictionaries were produced that have become standard (BAG; BDF). While, on the one hand, the number of 'Jewish peculiarities' admitted in biblical Greek has continued to reduce, on the other, the Aramaisms and Semitisms, especially of the Gospels and Acts (Wilcox 1965; Black 1967) have been intensively studied. The historians of the language are still debating the question: Is the Greek of the Bible just koine at various stages of its evolution and at various levels of literariness with distortions caused by elements of translationese, or was there a distinctive and relatively unified biblical (or Jewish) Greek as a variant form of koine in which Semitic idioms had become firmly indigenized?

The most recent research, under the impact of modern linguistic theory and semantics, has begun to challenge the historical diachronic approach to biblical Greek and to ask the synchronic question about how it operates as a language system. One

area of current enquiry is the attempt to produce an accurate description of verbal aspect in Greek. Is it correct to describe this in terms of tenses (past, present, future) since in non-indicative moods (infinitive, imperative, etc.) the distinction between the present, aorist and perfect forms has to do, not with time, but with the type of action involved (i.e. completed or incomplete, etc; see Porter and Carson 1993). Similar work on a range of other issues may well eventually result in the need to rewrite yet again the grammars and dictionaries of biblical Greek.

THE GREEK OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Very few books of the Greek Old Testament were originally composed in Greek, but it is nearly certain that all the New Testament books were. (If the early Christian movement produced any literature in Aramaic, it is now lost; probably it did not.) Their Greek ranges from a near-literary koine to a moderately educated popular form of the language.

The Greek of Mark's Gospel is strong if unsophisticated. Its meaning is rarely in any doubt, even without the help of particles and subordinate clauses. The high incidence of the historic present and of 'immediately' (*euthys*) or 'again' (*palin*) in a sense subjective to the narrator (viz. 'moving quickly on' and 'here's another point') adds pace and directness to the tale; everything appears to be happening before the very eyes of the audience's imagination with a kind of narrative inevitability that corresponds to Mark's providential view of history. His Gospel bears the stamp of its origins in oral performance and was probably intended to be itself orally performed.

Mark's style provided the model and set the standard for the later evangelists. Luke in particular must be deliberately imitating the idiom, as we can tell from the fact that his own stylistic range is much greater: the elegant preface (Luke 1.1–4), the Septuagintal ring of the infancy story (esp. Luke 1.46–55, 68–79), the eloquence of Paul's speech on the Areopagus (Acts 17.22–31) and the accurately detailed account of his shipwreck (Acts 27). John's Gospel, while the most complex theologically, is the simplest in terms of its Greek. Its vocabulary is more limited and its syntax, apart from the more frequent use of conditional clauses, undemanding. Certain idiosyncrasies are apparent, such as the overuse of the perfect tense, as though the action of the Gospel story is ongoing in its present effects and the overuse of 'therefore' (*oun*) as an all-purpose connective, for everything follows on logically in John's powerful apologetic.

Paul's Greek is a lively, contemporary koine, far less coloured by Semitic forms than most of the rest of the New Testament, though in places that influence is noticeable (e.g. in the tendency to position verbs at the beginning of sentences). Paul adopts and adapts the conventions of Greek letter-writing; for example in his opening greetings and in the formula 'I beseech you, brethren' to introduce passages of moral exhortation. He also has some acquaintance with the conventions of rhetoric, in particular the Stoic–Cynic debate form known as diatribe (e.g. Rom. 2.1–6, 17–34), which he has blended with his own preaching style that makes his letters sound in places more like sermons. This is even more the case with the other New Testament epistles, 1 John, for instance; and, at a higher level of literary competence, 1 Peter and Hebrews.

Of all the books of the New Testament only the Apocalypse of John sinks below the normal range of what is grammatically acceptable. This can only partly be explained by the interference of Semitic speech forms: the author also seems to lack certain basic competencies in the language, so that, for example, indicative verbs are made to do duty for participles (Rev. 1.4). We may suspect that the author of this text was much more comfortable in some other language (probably Aramaic) than in koine (Mussies 1971).

The Semitisms in the New Testament arise from several sources. They are partly due to the use of the LXX. Partly, they are to be explained by the fact that the authors, especially the evangelists, are retailing traditions that originated in Aramaic. Yet other Semitisms belong to the local colouring of Greek as spoken in Egypt and Syria–Palestine; that is, loan words like *Amen* and grammatical usages which, though rare in Greek, are frequent in the New Testament because they coincide with Semitic usage. With these exceptions, the Aramaic words in the Gospels are always translated; this probably indicates that their intended audiences knew little or nothing of the language.

Secondly, there are a number of Latin loan words, in the Gospels and Acts particularly; for example transliterations of ‘praetorium’, ‘legion’, ‘centurion’, ‘census’, ‘whip’ (*flagellum*), ‘executioner’ (*speculator*), words for weights and measures, like ‘pound’ (*litra*) or ‘pint’ (*sixtarius*), and for coinage, like *denarius* and *quadrans*. It is a mistake to think that such terms point to Rome as the provenance of the documents in which they occur (e.g. Mark). They simply reflect the all-pervasive presence of the Roman army, of commerce and administration in the provinces of the Empire. The Greek of the New Testament is a genuine vernacular, interacting with local circumstances and open to external influences.

LINGUISTIC INNOVATION IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed a message of salvation and hope that was couched in the terms and images of rural Palestinian Aramaic-speaking culture. That within half a century it had spread to all the major urban centres of the Roman world is an indication of the linguistic power and adaptability of the early Christian movement. The New Testament follows the syntactical conventions of a middle-brow koine with a strong Semitic colouring; it is in its specialized vocabulary that it becomes more distinctive.

Simple terms in daily use such as ‘way’, ‘word’, ‘brother’, ‘the breaking of bread’ were loaded with new, deeper meaning to refer to the movement itself (Acts 24.14), its basic message (Acts 4.4), the relationship of its adherents (Acts 11.1), and its central rite (Acts 2.42) respectively. New words were coined to refer to important institutions. For example, Apostle (*apostolos*) in ordinary Greek is a collective noun used to denote an embassy, a party of colonists or the crew of a ship. In the New Testament it becomes a singular title for a delegate sent from one church to another (2 Cor. 8.23), or, more importantly, for someone like Paul sent by the Christ to proclaim the gospel (1 Cor. 1.17). Eventually the word would be identified with membership of the Twelve as the founding fathers of the Church and the irreplace-

able historic witnesses to Jesus (Acts 1.21–2). In a similar way, the word ‘gospel’ (*euangelion*) appears in a peculiarly singular usage (Greek, like English, normally uses the plural) to refer to the only really ‘good news’, namely the offer of salvation in Christ.

The Christian movement also created its own technical vocabulary. For example baptism (*baptisma*) became the term for the Christian rite of initiation; the normal Greek word is *baptismos*, ‘immersion’ or ‘ablution’ without any ritual connotation. Or again, words like ‘rising up’ (*anastasis*) or ‘I keep awake’ (*grēgoreō*) in ordinary Greek would require contextual specification if they were to gain the technical meaning they have in many New Testament passages, of resurrection from the dead (esp. John 11.25) and eschatological expectancy (Mark 13.37).

Words with Semitic backgrounds provided another source of linguistic innovation. In standard Greek, the son of the man (*ho huios tou anthrōpou*) is a phrase that would have very limited and unexceptional applicability. In the Gospels, under the influence of its Hebrew (*ben adam*) and Aramaic equivalents, it describes the vocation to suffer like the prophets of old (Mark 9.12) and the certainty of vindication and appointment as judge in the age to come (Mark 8.38). Paul brilliantly translates this fuller sense by the equally Semitic but linguistically more immediately comprehensible title, the Last Adam (1 Cor. 15.45). Similarly repentance (*metanoia*, literally ‘a change of mind’) would not have had such a prominent role in the Gospels and Acts without the deeper meaning of its Semitic underlay, ‘return’; that is, return to the gracious God of the covenant. Paul’s use of the word righteousness (*dikaio-sunē*) as God’s gracious act of forgiveness in Christ (justification) embracing Gentiles as well as Jews is very strange when compared with secular Greek usage, but it makes much more sense when the Hebrew idiom, God’s righteousness as his ‘self-vindication’ before Israel and the nations, is taken into account (Hill 1967).

Koine Greek, like good Roman roads, no doubt facilitated the rapid spread of the Christian gospel. But Greek as one of the institutions of the biblical world provided more than just an efficient medium of mass communication. It provided also the vocabulary and grammar for expressing a new way of believing in the one God. Concepts like ‘grace’, ‘faith’ and ‘love’, by constant repetition and emphasis, were filled with an evocative meaning they lacked before. Prophecy was reborn in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The narrative form of God’s dealings with Israel was refocused on the simple but poignant story of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, as one who not only uttered the unutterable Word of God, but enacted and even embodied it (John 1.14).

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CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

WARFARE



Thomas M. Bolin

Because many of its texts deal with the history of the Iron Age states of Israel and Judah, the Hebrew Bible (HB) is replete with material concerning warfare and its accouterments. Palestine was the arena for many military actions on the part of the great powers that ruled antiquity. Its strategic location as a landbridge between Asia and Africa, and its coastline with ports allowing access to the Mediterranean, made Palestine a highly prized goal in the political and commercial designs of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Rulers in both regions glorified their military exploits in the region with large and elaborate monuments in their home countries, such as the account of the battle of Megiddo in 1468 BCE inscribed by Pharaoh Thutmosis III at the Temple of Amon-Re in Karnak, and the detailed reliefs erected by Sennacherib in his palace at Nineveh depicting the siege of Lachish in 701 BCE. Palestine's widely diverse geography prohibited large-scale political unification and, as a result, left it vulnerable to foreign domination. Given these factors, it is hardly surprising that much of the region's history for over a millennium comprises a list of the foreign powers that dominated it. Beginning in the mid-second millennium BCE, and with only partial interruption, the Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Ptolemies, Seleucids, and Romans each in turn exercised political control over all or part of Palestine, including ancient Israel. Practically all of the contemporaneous extrabiblical references to ancient Israel are in the military annals of her neighbors. In fact, the earliest known occurrence of the name 'Israel' is in a list of conquered regions and peoples on a victory stele of the Pharaoh Merneptah (1207 BCE; Hasel 1994). Consequently any discussion of warfare in the HB must deal with archeological and literary data from the larger context of the ancient Near East.

WARFARE IN ISRAEL AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Weapons

The vast majority of information concerning ancient weaponry comes from pictorial representations on monuments and tombs. Many of these are collected and illustrated in the work of Yadin (1963; see also Fretz 1992). Those parts of weapons

made from wood have not survived except in the dry climate of Egypt. Weapons unearthed in Palestine consist mainly of those parts made of bone, metal, or stone, which resist decay. By the transition from the Late Bronze to Early Iron Ages in Palestine (ca 1400–1150 BCE) – the earliest historical period that might pertain to ancient Israel – technological advances in the design and manufacture of weapons and fortifications had reached a point that would remain relatively unchanged until innovations were introduced by the Romans (Chapman 1997: 338). Offensive weapons were basically of two types: stabbing or cutting for hand-to-hand combat, and launching for fighting from a distance. Among the former were the sword, ax, mace, and heavy spear. Swords had been for centuries crescent-shaped, with the edge on the outside of the crescent and hence used mainly for cutting. By the Iron Age long, straight, dual-edged swords were introduced, which allowed for both cutting and stabbing. This is the kind of sword, ‘with two edges, a cubit in length’ (Judg 3:16), that figures prominently in the story of Ehud, who uses one to stab Eglon, driving the blade straight into the large man. Axes were also crescent-shaped, and fitted onto the haft either by a socket or tang. As armor, shields, and helmets became stronger, ax-blades were narrowed and made thicker in order to give them greater force upon impact. Spears were long and heavy, with broad heads. The base of the shaft was also fitted with a metal point so that the spear could be planted upright in the ground (1 Sam 26:7). Because of their size, spears were used mainly for stabbing and possessed a great deal of force, as illustrated in Numbers 25:6–9, where Phinehas impales two people on a single spear. While weapons made of iron were not considerably stronger than those made of bronze, the advent of iron technology in Palestine meant that swords, axes, and spears could be made in greater abundance due to the more plentiful resources of iron ore in the region (McNutt 1991; Chapman 1997: 337). Weapons used for long-range fighting were the bow, javelin, and sling. The bow was by far the most effective of these, allowing for greatest range and accuracy. In the second millennium BCE the compound bow was introduced, so named because it is made by combining wood, gut, and horn. The result was a bow that allowed for much greater tension on the string and, hence, greater distance and force. Arrowheads were made of metal or bone and were either leaf-shaped or barbed; these have been found in abundance, many inscribed (De Vaux 1961: 243). Javelins were shorter than spears and often thrown by means of a rope coiled around the shaft. The person throwing the javelin would hold the end of this rope and use it to launch the weapon; this method allowed for greater distance and force. Slings were pouches attached to long ropes; a stone was placed in the pouch and then swung over the thrower’s head. Stones could be as large as grapefruit and could be hurled a considerable distance with some force, as the famous story of the duel between David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 portrays.

To protect against these weapons soldiers utilized helmets, shields, and armor/mail coats. Helmets and shields varied in size and material. Egyptian and Assyrian shields were for the most part rectangular and almost the height of the bearer. Smaller round shields (bucklers) were introduced by the Sea Peoples, groups who came to Palestine after the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization in the thirteenth–twelfth centuries BCE (Yadin 1963: 65). Mail coats were fashioned of small, thin bits of metal resembling scales. Each bit was pierced and then sewn to an undergarment of cloth or

leather. According to some ancient texts, there could be as many as 1,000 scales on a single mail coat. Fragments of an Assyrian mail coat from the siege of Lachish in 701 BCE have been found (Shanks 1984: 54). The Sea Peoples also introduced armor consisting of metal or leather bands attached to an undergarment. While these different kinds of armor offered some protection against assault, they were often cumbersome and impeded movement. Weapons were made stronger and heavier in order to pierce mail and helmets. The seams or joins of the sleeves to the torso in mail coats were also a weakness. This is how King Ahab of Israel met his end in battle with the Arameans: 'But a certain man drew his bow and unknowingly struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate' (1 Kgs 22:34).

By far one of the most crucial military tools available to ancient armies was the chariot. For centuries it was unmatched in its quick maneuverability and striking capability. Solomon was reputed to have at his disposal 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses quartered in cities throughout his kingdom (1 Kgs 10:26). In a victory inscription of the Assyrian king Shalmanassar III (858–824 BCE) commemorating the battle of Qarqar, King Ahab of Israel is said to have fielded 2,000 chariots in a losing effort (Pritchard 1969: 279). Drawn by two or, sometimes, three horses, the chariot served as a mobile platform for archers and javelin throwers. The standard chariot team consisted of two men, a driver and an attacker, although occasionally a third man was added as shield-bearer. Armies sought a delicate balance between the chariot's protection and firepower and its speed and mobility. Consequently, developing technology in regards to the chariot involved a constant trade-off between strength and velocity. The presence of a second or third rider, in addition to shields, armor and spare weapons, greatly decreased the vehicle's mobility. Moving the axle back on the body as far as possible allowed for sharper turns but put more strain on the horses. The introduction by the Assyrians of infantry armed with long, heavy spears greatly reduced the effectiveness of chariotry. The vehicle's speed often proved lethal to its passengers when they were impaled on the spears. By the middle of the first millennium chariots were relegated to roles of transport. Mobile assault units were then fielded as cavalry, although their full potential would not be exploited for centuries, until the invention of the stirrup allowed the rider to steer the horse with his feet and freed his hands for use of a weapon (Littauer and Crouwel 1979; Drews 1989: 19; Chapman 1997: 338).

Fortifications and siegeworks

In looking at the development of fortifications in the ancient Levant one must bear in mind that it goes hand in hand with the growth of the city as a social reality. This is made clear at Jericho, the oldest walled town on earth. Excavators there discovered in one of the earliest strata (ca 7000 BCE) a large stone tower attached to a massive wall, which they interpreted to be part of defensive fortifications (see [Figure 29.1](#); Yadin 1963: 32–5; but for an alternative interpretation see Herzog 1992: 845). In Palestine the presence of large fortified cities on tells – artificial mounds containing the ruins of previous sites – occurs in several archeological periods often with long gaps in between where cities were destroyed and/or abandoned. Such gaps appear between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages (ca 2300–1800 BCE) and



Figure 29.1 Stone tower, Jericho, ca 7000 BCE. Photo Thomas M. Bolin.

the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages (ca 1400–1150 BCE). By Iron II (1000–539 BCE) many fortified cities are present in Palestine. With few notable exceptions, the kinds of fortifications devised during the Bronze Age were used in successive periods, although at certain times and locales some tactics were favored more than others.

Most cities were surrounded by walls that could vary in thickness, being as wide as 10 meters (see [Figure 29.2](#)). They were made of mudbricks, fieldstones, or ashlar placed on foundations of earth or stone (see Herzog 1992 and Fritz 1995: 33–5). No walls have survived to their original height, but based on the size of their foundations and information from pictorial scenes, they rose to a height of several stories.



Figure 29.2 Iron Age wall, Jerusalem, eighth century BCE. Photo Thomas M. Bolin.

The ramparts were topped with a crenelated parapet that often jutted out over the face of the wall. One type of wall used in the region (e.g., at Hazor, Samaria, and Beer-Sheba) during the early Iron Age was the casemate, which consisted of two parallel walls placed a few meters apart and joined by supporting perpendicular walls. The resulting structure had a series of chambers that could function as dwellings, guardhouses, or storerooms and were filled with earth and debris during a siege for added protection (Fritz 1995: 137–8). The harlot Rahab who aids the Israelites in the capture of Jericho is said to have lived in a house ‘on the outer side of the city wall, within the wall itself’ (Josh 2:15). Additionally cities often had a ring of earthen ramparts outside the perimeter of the walls. One specific type of rampart is the glacis, which rises at a steep angle up to the base of the walls. The surface could be coated with plaster or stones and during a siege wetted. This created a slippery, steep surface that prevented both frontal assault and mining operations by a besieging force. There were several means by which fortifications provided their defenders with an angle to fire upon an enemy and repulse an attack. Walls could be outfitted at regular intervals with towers, redans, that is, angular or semicircular protuberances, or with a jagged outline resembling the teeth in the blade of a circular saw (offset–inset walls). The Iron II stratum of Megiddo is a good example of this last type. Each kind of fortification allowed defenders to fire at the flanks of enemy

soldiers and siegeworks, thus exposing the attackers beyond the protection of their shields.

Because they constituted by their very nature the weakest component of urban fortifications, gates were equipped with several key defensive features. After the Early Bronze Age most cities possessed a single gate, although posterns and underground passages were also used. Gates were flanked on both sides by large towers, often constructed of large ashlars. These towers would have passages that led from chambers inside them and opened onto the gate's passageway. By the Iron Age these passages and chambers had been broadened to such an extent as to create anywhere from one to three pairs of large chambers on either side of the passageway that opened directly onto the gate (see [Figure 29.3](#); Herzog 1992: 847, 849–51; Fritz 1995: 36, 139). Chambered gates built according to a similar layout at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer were long dated to the tenth-century BCE and attributed to Solomon's building program mentioned in 1 Kings 9:15. However, after further investigation they have since been dated to the succeeding century (Ussishkin 1992: 673–7). Approaches to gates were often from the right (looking from the outside) and ran parallel to the walls before making a sharp right turn into the gate proper. This would require those entering the gate to slow in order to negotiate the turn. One can still see a variation of this kind of defensive feature in the Damascus Gate,



[Figure 29.3](#) City gate, Megiddo, ninth century BCE. Photo Thomas M. Bolin.

built by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1537 CE into the northern wall of the Old City of Jerusalem. One approaches the gate head-on, but must then make sharp left- and right-hand turns in rapid succession inside the gate before emerging into the city. The direction of approach of ancient gates would expose the unprotected right sides of attackers (because most people are right-handed, shields would be carried in the left) to fire from the walls. Some cities (e.g., Iron Age Dan, Megiddo, Beer-Sheva, and Lachish) were equipped with double gates, the second gate being placed farther down the tell perpendicular to the main city gate. Deuteronomy 3:5 talks of the fortified cities of King Og of Bashan in the Transjordan, 'with high walls, double gates, and bars' captured by the Israelites.

One crucial component of a city's defenses concerned its access to drinking water during a protracted siege. For obvious reasons many cities were built near natural springs. However, the springs would usually be located in a ravine, whereas the city would continually occupy rising ground as the successive layers of its tell grew. This often placed the spring outside the city walls and presented the dilemma of getting water inside the city during a siege when the gate could not be opened. To address this problem three different solutions were devised in the Iron Age, each requiring that tunnels be dug through many meters of prior debris and solid rock (Mazar 1990: 478–85; Fritz 1995: 151–60). Some tunnels tapped into subterranean sources of groundwater inside the city and allowed inhabitants to descend by means of stairs to draw water. At Gibeon a spiral staircase was carved into a shaft 10 meters in diameter that descended 25 meters down a flight of 172 steps to the groundwater (Fritz 1995: 152–3). Alternatively, an underground tunnel could be cut to provide direct access to the spring outside the city, which was then camouflaged to prevent detection from besiegers. A well-preserved example of this type of water system is at Megiddo. Other rock-cut channels brought water from an outside source into the city where the water collected in a pool. There are two examples of this system in Jerusalem: Warren's Shaft and Hezekiah's Tunnel. The former brought water inside the city to collect in a pool, and it could then be drawn up through a vertical shaft reached by subterranean stairs. The latter was dug by Hezekiah, most likely in preparation for the Assyrian siege of 701 BCE (2 Kgs 20:20; Sir 48:17). An inscription found in the shaft and now in a museum in Istanbul records the dramatic moment where quarrymen, digging from both sides, met and joined both halves of the tunnel. 'While there were still three cubits to be cut through, there was heard the voice of a man calling to his fellow' (Pritchard 1969: 321). Another reference to Hezekiah's tunnel in the HB could be in an anachronism that occurs in the story of David's purported capture of the city, set two centuries before Hezekiah. There David states that if a person wants to capture Jerusalem, 'let him get up the water shaft' (2 Sam 5:8, although the text is dubious). No water system resembling that mentioned by David is known to exist from that time. While the Warren Shaft is dated earlier than Hezekiah's Tunnel, one cannot use it to gain entry into the city. However, the Hezekiah Tunnel will allow a person access from the external spring into the city at the Siloam pool. One can still walk the length of the tunnel and exit at the pool, as tourists do to this day.

We know a great deal about siegeworks in ancient Palestine from Egyptian and Assyrian reliefs (illustrations in Yadin 1963; Ussishkin 1980; 1982; Shanks 1984;

Russell 1991). The biblical text mentions in several places the horrors brought about by protracted siege, the most notable being famine. 2 Kings 6:24–32 tells of the populace of Samaria devouring its own children during a siege by the Arameans. Attackers would throw up a ramp against a vulnerable part of the city's defenses, most often the gate. The Assyrian siege ramp of 701 BCE is visible at Lachish (Figure 29.4). Certainly the most impressive and well-known ramp in the region is that erected by the Romans at Masada in 73 CE, which rises nearly 150 meters above the desert floor and reaches almost to the top of the mountain fortress (see Figure 29.5). Defenders inside the city could counter with a defense ramp in an attempt to maintain the advantage of higher ground; this strategy was employed by the inhabitants of Lachish against the Assyrians in 701 BCE (Ussishkin 1984). Battering rams would be sent up the ramp, supported by archers and slingers who could be positioned on movable siege towers to place them higher than the defenders in the city. Ezekiel is commanded by God to symbolize the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians by taking a brick and placing 'a ramp . . . and battering rams against it all around' (Ezek 4:2). The most potent rams were those of the Assyrians, which were placed on mobile carts covered with leather and metal armor. A long pole with a large head was suspended by ropes inside the cart. The pole was swung back on the ropes and released in an attempt to lodge it between stones or bricks in the wall. Once the pole was inserted into the wall the ram's operators would jiggle it in an attempt to loosen bricks or stones. Defenders would hurl torches on the rams



Figure 29.4 Assyrian siege ramp, Lachish, 701 BCE. Photo Thomas M. Bolin.



Figure 29.5 Roman siege ramp, Masada, 73 CE. Photo Thomas M. Bolin.

in order to set them alight. The attackers, in turn, would pour water on the poles and carts. In addition to torches, the besieged would also rain arrows and stones down upon the attackers and occasionally engage in sorties outside the city walls. The attackers would often attempt to negotiate a parley with the city before beginning a siege, such as the Assyrians did under Sennacherib at Jerusalem in 2 Kings 18–9. In fact, Deuteronomy 20, which is the HB’s ‘code of conduct’ for warfare, advises Israelite armies to attempt a peaceful resolution of a siege before taking a city. Occasionally a city would capitulate, as in the case of David’s siege of Abel Beth-Maacah (2 Sam 20:14–22) where the inhabitants accede to the request of David’s commander to turn over the traitor Sheba by lobbing his head over the wall to the besiegers. Often the parleys would not avert a siege. In 1 Kings 20 Ben-Hadad of Aram camps his army before Samaria and sends a threatening message to King Ahab. Ahab responds with a martial proverb – ‘One who puts on armor should not brag like one who takes it off’ (v. 11) – that does little to appease the Aramean king. Finally, cities could be taken by ruse or betrayal. The best known subterfuge used in the taking of a city comes not from the Bible but mythology, where the Trojan

Horse of the Greeks brings about the fall of Troy. However, there are instances in the HB of cities falling both to ruse and betrayal. In Judges 1:22–6 Bethel is taken when one of its inhabitants shows the invading Israelites the way into the city.

The fates of the defeated were varied, but rarely ever good. Noncombatants, especially women, were considered spoil and often taken into slavery (for the role of women in biblical warfare, see Niditch 1993: 78–89). In Judges 5, as the mother of Sisera wonders to herself why her son delays in returning from battle, she offers the following explanation: ‘Are they not finding and dividing the spoil? A girl or two for every man’ (v. 30). The irony of her words is clear to the reader, who knows that Sisera will never come home from the battle because he has fallen by the hand of a woman. Many captives were executed. Deuteronomy 20:13–14 states that when the Israelites capture a town they must kill every man but may take women and children as booty. Assyrian reliefs portray the killings of captives with graphic cruelty, depicting men being impaled or flayed. In a relief from his palace in Nineveh, the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (668–33 BCE) is shown dining while the head of a conquered enemy hangs from a nearby tree. Assyrian ruthlessness was legendary in antiquity and thus it is that the prophet Nahum can say to them, ‘Who has ever escaped your endless cruelty?’ (Nah 3:19).

Victorious armies did not always spare their enemies. In an inscription dating from ca 830 BCE the Moabite king Mesha tells of capturing the cities of Atarot and Nebo in the Transjordan and killing their entire populations (7,000 men, women, and children in the case of Nebo) as an offering for his god, Chemosh (Smelik 1991: 29–50). This practice is parallel to the so-called ‘ban’ (חֶרֶם) in the HB, where certain peoples are set aside for total destruction because of their status before God as abominable. This is Yahweh’s decree concerning the fate of the entire population of Canaan, and the Israelites’ continued favor from God is contingent upon the total extermination of the Canaanites (Deut 20:16–17). The HB speaks repeatedly of certain cities captured by the Israelites being ‘put to the ban’, that is, exterminated, on divine command (e.g., Num 21:34–5; Josh 6:17–18). Saul’s violation of the order to annihilate the Amalekites and their livestock is what leads to his rejection by Yahweh (1 Sam 15). It remains for the prophet Samuel to fulfill the ban on the Amalekites: ‘And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before Yahweh in Gilgal’ (v. 33). This biblical mandate for genocide has caused exegetes much consternation, exerting a profound influence on scholarship that has until only recently gone unnoticed (Niditch 1993; Whitelam 1996: 79–87).

One strategy utilized in the first millennium by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians in regards to conquered peoples was deportation. Under the auspices of these three military powers thousands of people were moved great distances. This tactic figures prominently in the HB since the capital cities of both Israel and Judah were captured and their inhabitants deported by the Assyrians (721 BCE) and Babylonians (597, 587 BCE) respectively (2 Kgs 17; 24:8–17; 25:1–21). Archeological evidence bears out the dramatic impact both deportations had on the population of Palestine (Jamieson-Drake 1991: 48–80; Younger 1998: 211–19). Deportation afforded many advantages to regimes seeking hegemony over vast populations and territories. Deportees would be relocated to an unfamiliar region, which contributed to deterring revolt. More importantly after the passage of time, usually no more than three or four

generations, deported peoples begin to lose a sense of their past and, hence, their identity as they become assimilated into the structures created by their conquerors. Deportation was often presented as the establishment of order or the rectification of flawed political relationships. This is related to the worldview of the ancient Near Eastern powers, which understood areas beyond their borders or sphere of influence to be chaotic and uncivilized (Liverani 1990: 33–112, 135–43; Younger 1990). Consequently, military conquest and deportation are viewed as re-establishing the proper state of affairs in a region. In his account of the destruction of Samaria in 721 BCE, Sargon II of Assyria notes that ‘I led away as prisoners 27,790 inhabitants . . . the town I rebuilt better than it was before and settled therein people from countries which I myself had conquered’ (Pritchard 1969: 284; see also Oded 1979; Younger 1998). In the HB the spokesman of Sennacherib makes a strong propagandistic ploy to Jerusalem during the siege of 701 BCE by painting deportation under the Assyrians as a blessing:

Thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree, and drink water from your own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and honey, that you may live and not die.’
(2 Kgs 18:31–2 NRSV)

Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon (605–562 BCE) describes his conquest of Lebanon and resettlement of its inhabitants thus: ‘I made that country [Lebanon] happy by eradicating its enemy everywhere. All its scattered inhabitants I collected and reinstalled’ (Pritchard 1969: 307). Nebuchadnezzar’s portrayal of deportation as the restoration of displaced peoples to their rightful homes is a propagandistic tool used to great success also by Cyrus the Great of Persia (Mullen 1997). Cyrus’s self-aggrandizement is taken up by the HB, where he is lauded for restoring the Judean exiles to their homeland.

The ideology of war in the ancient Near East

Like so many other aspects of ancient Near Eastern culture, religion was intricately bound up with the waging of war and the rationale behind it. Kings were seen as the chosen representatives of the national god and went to war as the god’s champion. Most ancient texts that deal with battles are highly tendentious because they serve mainly to magnify the king by telling of his power and bravery (Liverani 1990: 115–25; De Odorico 1995). It was understood that a war between two peoples was also a war between their gods. Battle then was not only a military matter, but possessed cultural and theological components as well, and the victory of one people over another represented the triumph of one god over another. Again, the words of the Assyrian envoy to Jerusalem clearly show this:

Do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying ‘Yahweh will deliver us.’ Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered its land out

of the hand of the king of Assyria? . . . Who among all the gods of the countries has delivered their countries out of my hand, that Yahweh should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? (2 Kgs 18:33–5 NRSV, adapted)

When a city was taken its temples would be destroyed and its gods taken into captivity, a symbolic act that underscored the complete conquest of the vanquished. In light of the important role of the gods in warfare, their favor was necessary for an army to be victorious. Prophets and oracles were consulted and sacrifices performed to insure providential regard by the divine powers (Kang 1989: 11–110). With few exceptions, every battle in the HB is either undertaken at Yahweh's command or preceded by consultation of an oracle or means of divination. It is against this backdrop of the regular consultation of prophets before battle that King Ahab complains of the prophet Micaiah that 'he never prophesies anything favorable about me, but only disaster' (1 Kgs 22:8). Outside of the Bible there is the famous case of Croesus, who is given an oracle stating that if he goes to war against the Persians he will destroy a great kingdom (Herodotus *Ana.* 1.53). Thinking this an auspicious omen, Croesus undertakes the campaign and in the process destroys his own realm. According to 2 Kings 3:21–37, the Moabite king Mesha (mentioned above) sacrificed his eldest son as a burnt offering to his god in an attempt to turn the tide of battle against the Israelites (cf. Levenson 1993: 3–52).

In addition to the portrayal of the king as the favored son of his god, some texts make the claim that the king and his armies had been chosen by the god of the conquered peoples to restore order. So Sennacherib claims to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, 'Yahweh said to me, "Go up against this land and destroy it"' (2 Kgs 18:25). Cyrus of Persia makes use of this assertion in an inscription dealing with his conquest of Babylon. The text paints a picture of chaos throughout Babylon. Proper worship of the gods has been neglected by the Babylonian king: 'Daily he did blabber incorrect prayers. He furthermore interrupted in a fiendish way the regular offerings, . . . The worship of Marduk, the king of the gods, he changed into an abomination' (Pritchard 1969: 315). Many gods have been taken to Babylon against their will. In search of a champion to redress their grievances, Marduk, the god of Babylon, 'scanned and looked through all the countries, searching for a righteous ruler . . . Then he pronounced the name of Cyrus' (Pritchard 1969: 315). Cyrus, acting in accordance with the will of the Babylonians' god, restores the rites and returns the other gods to their proper homes. This portrayal of Cyrus as the savior of the vanquished people chosen by their god figures prominently in the HB where Cyrus is understood as the elect instrument of Yahweh and designated as the 'anointed,' or 'messiah' (משיח; Isa 45:1; c.f. Thompson 1992: 348–51). This attempt to make sense of a political reality – in this instance Cyrus's conquest – by means of a theological explanation that understands the foreign conqueror as the instrument of Yahweh is one of the favorite strategies of the biblical authors.

WARFARE AND THE HEBREW BIBLE

Biblical narrative and history

Battle narratives in the HB can be grouped into two categories. First are those found in Numbers–Judges that describe the conquest and settlement of Canaan by the Israelites. Next are those in 1 Samuel–2 Kings that tell of the campaigns undertaken by the kings of Judah and Israel. The enemies of the Israelites in these latter accounts are mainly neighboring small city- or nation-states such as Ammon, Edom, Moab and additionally are the Philistines along the Palestinian coast and the Arameans in Syria. With the exception of the Exodus story, the great powers of Egypt and Mesopotamia appear in the Bible as conquerors who either put the Israelites into vassalage or defeat them.

The question of the historicity of the conquest narratives has been one of the most hotly debated problems in twentieth-century biblical scholarship. For a time archeological data were thought to support the biblical account of the military incursion of the Israelites into Palestine from the Transjordan. However further excavations revealed that not only was there no supporting external evidence for the conquest, but that the archeological record speaks directly against any such event (Ramsey 1981: 65–98; Finkelstein 1988: 295–314). Sites such as Arad, Jarmuth, Ai, and Jericho were shown to have been abandoned for centuries prior to and/or during the putative time of the Israelites' conquest of them described in the book of Joshua. Also, many sites showed no evidence of occupation – Israelite or otherwise – in Iron I. In addition to throwing open the question of Israelite origins in Palestine, this development also led to a reevaluation of the literary nature of the conquest accounts. It is now understood that the picture portrayed in the book of Joshua of a unified Israel capturing the entire land of Canaan and exterminating its inhabitants is an idealized fiction. Many scholars believed the alternative scenario in the book of Judges to be more realistic and hence, historical, because it depicts the tribes working separately and sometimes against each other in a partial and piecemeal conquest of the land. Plausibility, however, should not be confused with history. It has been known for a long time that the texts acquired their present form centuries after the events they purport to relate, and that their authors subsumed the matter of recording history to theological and rhetorical concerns. Uppermost among the latter is the repeated understanding that the Israelites' military success is due solely to the intercession of Yahweh, whose assistance is contingent upon his people's rejection of alien worship. The most obvious example of this is the schematized structure of the book of Judges, which repeats *ad nauseam* the pattern of Israelite apostasy from Yahweh, followed in turn by Yahweh's rejection in the form of foreign oppression.

With the material concerning the Israelite and Judean kings, the issue of historicity is mixed. Recently skepticism has been voiced concerning the historical worth of the texts dealing with Saul, David, and Solomon. Analogous to the case of the conquest, certain archeological data thought to demonstrate the existence of a highly structured nation-state as portrayed in the Bible have been reexamined. Much of the monumental architecture and fortifications excavated at many sites and dated

to the reign of Solomon (e.g., at Hazor, Gezer, and Megiddo) have now been redated to the following century (Finkelstein 1996). Moreover, survey results indicate that settlement sizes and distributions were not large enough to support the bureaucracy a monarchy would require (Jamieson-Drake 1991). To this is added the curious fact that to date, no reference to the alleged vast kingdom of David and Solomon (with the possible exception of a stele from Tel Dan, but several key issues surrounding this text have yet to be established) has been discovered in the records of other countries with which the Bible says these kings dealt. Of the many histories of Palestine/Israel published, two of the most recent take opposing sides on the issue of the historicity of the United Monarchy of David and Solomon (Thompson 1992: 108–16, 146–57; Ahlström 1993: 421–542). Many scholars, however, use the same methodology in historical analysis of the materials in Joshua–Judges in regard to 1 Samuel–1 Kings, that is, remove the miraculous or exaggerated elements from the text and use the remainder to reconstruct Israelite history.

Concerning the kings after Solomon we are on much firmer ground. Many of them, for example, Omri, Ahab, Jehu, and Hezekiah, are mentioned in contemporaneous extrabiblical documents, most of which deal with the military defeat of these kings. Yet despite the independent attestation of these biblical figures, caution should be exercised in assessing the historical worth of the stories in which they figure. There is hardly a better illustration of this need for care than the state of affairs presented by the independent accounts of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701 BCE. Here is the Assyrian version inscribed on a clay prism:

As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities . . . Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him . . . I increased the tribute . . . due to me as his overlord . . . Hezekiah himself, whom the terror-inspiring splendor of my lordship had overwhelmed . . . did send me, later, to Nineveh, my lordly city . . . all kinds of valuable treasures, his own daughters, concubines, male and female musicians. (Pritchard 1969: 288)

This report is similar to many others in the Assyrian annals. The vassal state foolishly chooses to rebel against Assyrian hegemony. The great king, led by his god, brings his military power to bear on the transgressor, who either capitulates or is destroyed. In this instance Hezekiah resubmits to Sennacherib's yoke and is assessed additional tribute as his punishment. The biblical account, portions of which have already been quoted, describes some of the events in the same way as the Assyrian version: Sennacherib captures many Judean cities and Hezekiah pays him tribute. However the biblical text resolves the conflict in a significantly different way, by means of a prophecy of Isaiah and its fulfilment:

Therefore thus says Yahweh concerning the King of Assyria: 'He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege-ramp against it. By the way that he came, the same way he will return; he shall not come into this city', says Yahweh . . . That very night the angel of Yahweh set out and struck down 185,000 in the camp

of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh. (2 Kgs 19:32–3, 35–6 NRSV, adapted)

Both accounts are guided by their respective ideologies. For the Assyrians, the issue is Hezekiah's abrogation of his duties as vassal. The military expedition is cast in light of a redress of grievances; the aggressor is depicted as a wronged party in a contract dispute. Once Sennacherib has reasserted his authority and meted out proper punishment, he returns home and collects tribute from his chastised servant. Order and right relations are restored. In 2 Kings, the Assyrians are portrayed as the villains. In a key difference from the Assyrian account, Hezekiah begs for forgiveness and, in an attempt to buy him off, offers gold and silver to Sennacherib *before* he lays siege to Jerusalem. Accepting the tribute and then carrying out the siege regardless makes Sennacherib the scoundrel, necessitating the intervention of Yahweh in the form of a fantastic fairytale rescue. In this instance, because of the presence of an independent account of the same event, scholars are able to separate rhetoric, ideology, and miracle from both accounts in an attempt to glean historical knowledge. However, in the case of the narratives about the conquest and the United Monarchy, absence of corroborating textual and archeological evidence, presence of discordant data, and knowledge of the ideologically tendentious nature of ancient narrative combine to advise against too facile a reading.

Yahweh as warrior and the idea of holy war in the Hebrew Bible

Of the many metaphors used of God in the HB, that of divine warrior is one of the most prevalent, appearing in the historical books (Gen–2 Kings), prophetic writings, and the Psalter. God is frequently referred to as 'Yahweh of hosts' (יהוה צבאות) or 'Yahweh, the god of hosts' (יהוה אלהי צבאות). Thus David says to Goliath, 'I come to you in the name of Yahweh of hosts, the god of the armies of Israel' (1 Sam 17:45) and the prophetic texts are replete with the phrase 'Yahweh, the God of hosts is his name' (e.g., Isa 47:4; Jer 10:16; Amos 4:13). For weapons, God has recourse to the mighty power of storms, with their wind and lightning bolts (Judg 5; Ps 68). Some connection has been made between Yahweh's characterization as a storm god and the etymological derivation of his name (van der Toorn 1995). Creation was understood as God's cosmic, primeval battle against creatures symbolic of chaos. Certain texts that celebrate Yahweh's victory over the monstrous brutes Behemoth and Leviathan before the creation of the world (Ps 74; Job 39–41) have parallels with other cosmogonic texts from the ancient Near East (Miller 1973: 8–63). Thus, in the same way that war propaganda understood conquest as the institution of order, so too Israelite creation mythology viewed the cosmos as an ordered whole under the sovereignty of Yahweh its conqueror.

God is often portrayed as assisting the Israelites in their military endeavors (list of examples in von Rad [1958] 1991: 42–9). This is certainly the most common understanding of the divine role in warfare throughout the ancient Near East; gods were understood to go into battle with armies and were given credit for victories

(Kang 1989; Hiebert 1992: 877). In some biblical texts Yahweh concretely accompanies the Israelites into war in the form of the Ark that is carried by the Israelites (1 Sam 4). A variant of this theme of divine assistance appears in texts where it is clear that God's aid not merely supplements military force, but supplies it with necessary power or even replaces it entirely. The story of Gideon makes this point explicit. There Yahweh commands Gideon to reduce the size of his army before battling the Midianites, for otherwise 'Israel would only take the credit away from me' (Judg 7:2). Even more drastic is the account of the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 14. There the Israelites do nothing and it is Yahweh alone who fights and destroys the Egyptians. Moses promises the Israelites, 'Yahweh will fight for you, and you have only to keep still' (v. 14). This is echoed in the words of the Egyptians when their chariot wheels are clogged: 'Let us flee from the Israelites, for Yahweh is fighting for them against Egypt' (v. 25). After the 'battle' is over and the Israelites survey the Egyptian casualties, their victory song acclaims Yahweh as a warrior with prowess in battle (Exod 15:1-10; cf. 2 Chron 20). This emphasis on human passivity in military endeavors is taken up in the prophetic literature and made obligatory, so that true faith in Yahweh requires the abnegation of recourse to military action. Isaiah chastises his king for seeking help from Egypt in meeting the Assyrians: 'Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and who rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult Yahweh' (Isa 31:1).

This theme is also taken up in the Psalms, which declare that

A king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
and by its great might it cannot save. (Ps 33:16-17 NRSV; cf. also Ps 44:6)

One should be careful not to confuse pacifism with this mandate against taking up arms. The authors are not speaking against the immorality of war, as an examination of the numerous oracles against foreign nations in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Amos shows (cf. Weisman 1998: 55-100). Rather they are urging the Israelites to let Yahweh exact the reckoning from their enemies since he can do it much more effectively than they (cf. Niditch 1993: 148). Such an ideology, which speaks against military involvement but hopes for divine recompense upon the foe, is appropriate for the small states of Israel and Judah in their encounters with the larger powers of Egypt and Mesopotamia in the first millennium. This hoped-for vengeance that is to come at some point in the indeterminate future is occasionally referred to in the prophetic texts as 'the day of Yahweh' (although this phrase has other meanings in the HB). The motif of God vindicating the righteous and punishing the wicked takes on an eschatological cast, and its pairing with the imagery of the divine cosmic battle describing this drama of divine justice at the end of the present age plays a role in the doctrines of apocalyptic groups in ancient Israel and early Judaism. It is by means of apocalyptic that a portion of the theological views about war in the HB leave their most influential mark in the New Testament (Hanson 1984: 359-61).

Closely related to the understanding of God's role in warfare is that which views the armies of Israel's enemies as tools with which Yahweh punishes Israel. This theme is prevalent in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in reference to the invading Babylonians. Similarly, in telling of the defeat and exile of Samaria at the hands of the Assyrians, the biblical author notes, 'This occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against Yahweh their god' (2 Kgs 17:7). So too the account of the exile of the Jerusalem elite by the Babylonians is accompanied by the editorial remark that 'surely this came upon Judah at the command of Yahweh, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh' (2 Kgs 24:3). In Isaiah, God reminds the Assyrians that they are his tool, and as such are not to act contrary to his intentions.

Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger –
the club in their hands is my fury!
Against a godless nation [Israel] I send him,
and against the people of my wrath I command him . . .
But this is not what he intends,
nor does he have this in mind [. . .]
Shall the axe vaunt itself over the one who wields it,
or the saw magnify itself against the one who handles it?
(Isa 10:5–7, 15 NRSV)

As mentioned already, the HB understands the return of deportees from Babylon to Jerusalem under Cyrus as an act of God by means of his chosen agent. Although the idea that God will one day fight in place of the Israelites against their enemies appears to contradict the belief that these conquering enemies are the instruments of the very same god, these two notions should be seen as differing methods the biblical authors employed to make sense of repeated Israelite domination at the hands of the great Near Eastern powers. When one always loses, hopes are nursed that either the oppressors will eventually receive their just deserts or that such calamities must happen 'for a reason' and that things are under the control of a just and benevolent God.

In light of the major role played by Yahweh in biblical warfare, scholars have attempted to discern a holy war theology in the religion of the ancient Israelites. The name most associated with the idea of holy war in the HB is Gerhard von Rad. In a small but influential study ([1958] 1991) von Rad argued that from its earliest days as a loose tribal confederation in Palestine prior to the establishment of the monarchy, Israel had a doctrine of holy war. It was part of the Israelite religious cultus and involved certain rites in which Yahweh's aid was invoked before battle and praised afterward. Behind these external practices lay the faith of the Israelites, unique among their neighbors, that Yahweh was a god who intervened decisively in their history. Von Rad's book traces the historical vicissitudes of this tenet through Israelite history which he constructed from the Bible. Little of von Rad's thesis has escaped criticism. Most importantly, further examination of the battle reports from countries surrounding ancient Israel show the Bible's understanding of the divine as an active participant in battle (and history in general) to

be part and parcel of ancient Near Eastern belief (Albrektson 1967; Weippert 1972; Jones 1975; 1989: 299–302; Kang 1989). Put another way, one expects the Israelite battle accounts to claim that their god fights for them because that is the norm for such accounts from that region and epoch. To attempt to claim uniqueness (and invariably, superiority) for biblical practices against that of their neighbors in this instance amounts to special pleading. Additionally there has been little agreement about what exactly is understood by the phrase ‘holy war.’ Does it imply war against ‘unbelievers’? Does it require only the belief that the god fights alongside his armies? Are there specific practices that distinguish it from secular war? Given the fundamental role in antiquity of religion in international relations, especially warfare, the search for a distinct category, ‘holy war,’ is perhaps a case of losing sight of the forest for the trees. Nevertheless the history of this concept in modern scholarship is illuminating (survey in Lind 1980: 23–34; Ollengburger’s Introduction to von Rad [1958] 1991: 1–33). The perception that the HB contained a doctrine of holy war has been used to advance nationalist, bellicose aims (Gunkel 1916; discussion in Mitchell 1995). More recently it has confounded Jewish and Christian exegetes and theologians who argue for the renunciation of violence on biblical grounds (Craigie 1978; Lind 1980; Walzer 1992).

Although those for whom the Bible represents divine revelation should no longer have to contend with the idea that it advocates a doctrine of holy war, many of its narratives are shocking in their brutality and glorification of violent conquest. As this chapter hopes to have demonstrated, however, this aspect of the HB is due to a vast network of beliefs that created and sustained the cultural milieux of the ancient Near East. In antiquity cities, peoples, and nations owed their inception and continued survival to military success. So it is that the oft-quoted opening to Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the epic account of the birth of Rome, begins *Arma virumque cano* – ‘I sing of arms and the man.’ As a collection whose aim in part is to tell of the origin of the people of Israel, the HB likewise extols the military prowess of great figures (real or imagined) who through their struggles helped to create Israel. The nascent Israelite nation wandering in the desert between Egypt and Canaan for a generation is portrayed in the biblical text as a vast mobile army, organized in groups of descending size (De Vaux 1961: 214). That is not to say that the HB never exhibits a pacifist stance. In addition to several prophetic texts that foretell a utopia free from the horrors of war (e.g., the famous passage in Isa 2 carved in stone at the United Nations building) there is the lesser-known but provocative story in 2 Kings 6:8–23. There Yahweh strikes an entire Aramean army blind at the request of Elisha. The prophet then leads the helpless force to Samaria, where it is at the mercy of the Israelite king. When the king asks Elisha whether he should destroy the enemy army, he is told ‘No . . . set food and water before them . . . and let them go to their master’ (v. 22). However texts such as these (here one might also add the antiwar satire of Aristophanes’s *Lysistrata*) are the exception rather than the rule in ancient literature. Yet despite this pessimistic observation, one may take comfort in the fact that through their writings the Israelites have had greater influence on history than their more powerful contemporaries did with their armies, proving perhaps that the pen is indeed mightier than the sword.

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CHAPTER THIRTY

THE ARTS

Architecture, music, poetry, psalmody



Susan Gillingham

What counted as ‘the arts’ in the biblical world? An equivalent Hebrew word, *maʿaśeh*, occurs only twice in the Old Testament, referring to skill or craftsmanship (in this case, of perfumers: see Exodus 30:35 and 2 Chronicles 16:4). An equivalent Greek word, *technē*, occurs just once in the New Testament, and here it refers to the representative art of pagan cultures (see Acts 17:29). So given this limited framework of reference, it is clear that any attempt to discover the significance of ‘the arts’ in the Bible is going to be difficult. If we mean *representational arts* – figurative and iconographic art especially – then the evidence within the biblical tradition itself is surprisingly slim. If we mean *performing arts* – music, drama and song – then even here the actual evidence is not overwhelming. But if we mean *literary arts* – poetry, psalmody, narrative – then because the Bible as a collection of literature is full of poems and stories, we shall of course find a wealth of such material.

How are we to assess the evidence? Archeological studies are inevitably fragmentary and inconclusive, and the relevant descriptions in the Bible itself are selective and often biased. It is quite clear that orthodoxy in both the Jewish and Christian biblical tradition was expressed not so much through visual art forms as through words – through preaching, writing, collecting, editing and preserving ancient texts. The essence of these traditions is more ethical than aesthetic: the Torah and the Sermon on the Mount exemplify well the core belief that an obedient life surrendered to God is closer to true faith than anything evoked by artistic endeavour. Furthermore, creative expression was somewhat crippled by the teaching in the second of the Ten Commandments: ‘You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth . . .’ (Exodus 20:4 RSV). Just how much this is the case will be seen in the following section.

REPRESENTATIONAL ARTS AND THE BIBLE: AN ASSESSMENT OF ARCHITECTURE AND ARTEFACTS

Within the Bible, representational art falls into two categories: popular artefacts, in terms of personal items such as pottery, textiles, seals, jewellery and amulets; and,

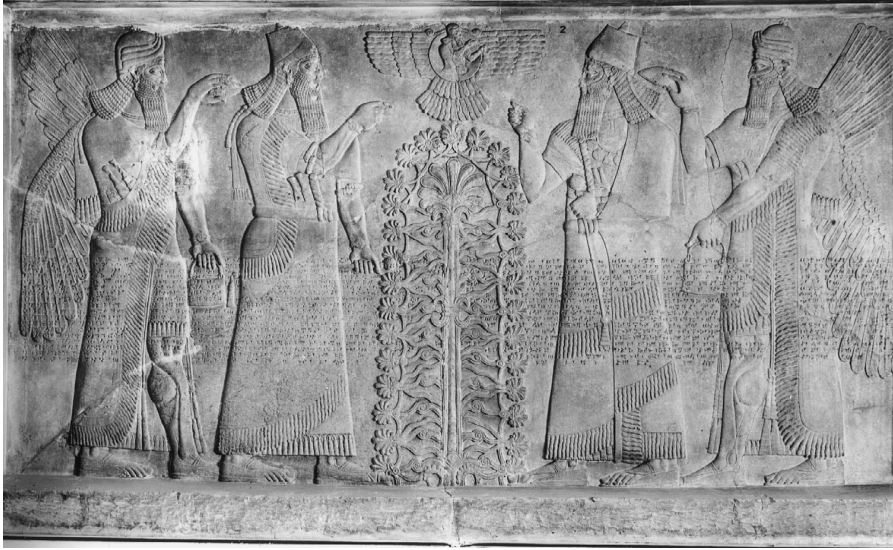


Figure 30.1 The king and the sacred tree: relief from Ashurnasirpal's throne room, Nimrud, ninth century BCE. Copyright British Museum.

on a more public level, monumental architecture (such as palaces, defences, temples, and official dwellings). In ancient times, Israel borrowed much from the surrounding cultures; yet, because of her distinctive beliefs, she also adapted much as well.

Excavations at royal palaces offer an interesting example of this phenomenon. Throughout palaces in the ancient Near East, representational artwork – whether on reliefs, ivory carvings, victory steles, and sculptures and official seals – is a predominant feature. The military and domestic concerns of particular religions and cultures are all skilfully portrayed in decorative human figures and deities, depicting national pride and public grandeur. Outside Israel, important examples are as various as the Hittite palaces at Bogazkoy (Hattusha) in Anatolia; the Egyptian palace of Akenaten, the worshipper of the sun-god Re, at Tell-el-Amarna, on the river Nile; the Ugaritic palace at Ras Shamra, in Syria; the Assyrian palaces of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud, of Sargon II at Khorsabad, and of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal at Nineveh; and the Persian palaces of Darius I and Xerxes at Persepolis. Of these, the Assyrian sculptures and basalt reliefs of sacred trees, the winged disk of the sun, and attendant priests offer a striking illustration (see [Figure 30.1](#)).

Israelite monumental architecture, by contrast, is somewhat different. Figurative art is minimal, with a handful of exceptions. For example, at the Samaritan palace of Omri, king of Israel (ninth century BCE), plaques of carved ivory have been found, produced in Syria, and yet also suggesting Egyptian and Canaanite influence: one of these is a relief of a carved cherub set amid palm trees (see [Figure 30.2](#)). Other notable examples include a well-preserved wall carving of a roaring lion at a sanctuary called Hazor, and ivory plaques depicting bulls, lions and eagles from a fortress town called Lachish. But these are very much the exceptions: the most common decoration is floral, and occasionally geometric, whether using examples as various



Figure 30.2 Cherub and 'palmette' on ivory: from Samaria, ninth–eighth century BCE.
Copyright Israel Antiquities Authority.

as decorations found on defence works (gates, towers and walls) at Megiddo and Mizpah, from the ninth to seventh centuries BCE, and carvings on rock-cut tombs in Jerusalem, dating from the fifth to third centuries BCE.

The above examples are all from Old Testament times. From the first century BCE to the first century CE, the same reserved style, borrowing yet adapting the artwork of other cultures, is still in evidence at the Herodian palaces at Caesarea, Sebaste (Samaria) and Masada. Fragments of frescos and mosaics found at these palaces certainly reflect the influence of Graeco-Roman art, but there is undoubtedly a distinctive Jewish adaptation. Again we find several examples of intricate decoration, but it is floral and geometric art; given the Graeco-Roman milieu, the lack of figurative art is remarkable.

In terms of more popular artefacts from everyday life, the most significant discoveries in Syro-Palestine are from Canaanite culture (c. 1600–1200 BCE), of which the best-known examples have been found at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) in Syria, dating from 1400 to 1300 BCE. These offer some insights into the way that Canaanite art combined several different cultures. For example, a golden embossed plate found close to the temple mount depicts the king of Ugarit hunting: the animals, chariots, hunting-games and the sacred tree all suggest Babylonian and Akkadian influence,



Figure 30.3 Golden embossed bowl showing the king of Ugarit hunting: from Ugarit, fifteenth–fourteenth century BCE. From *The Cuneiform Texts of Ras Shamra-Ugarit* by C. F. A. Schaeffer (Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, London: Oxford University Press 1936). Copyright British Academy.

while the dress and posture of the figures reveals Egyptian borrowing (see [Figure 30.3](#)). On a more domestic level, countless clay figurines, and innumerable seals, amulets and painted pottery have been found, not only at Ugarit but throughout Syro-Palestine – at Jerusalem, Samaria, Megiddo, Beth-Shean and Tell el Far ‘ah – which further illustrate the cultural influence of Canaanite art combined with a mix of other cultures. At Beth-Shean, dating from the Late Bronze Age, at the time when the city served as a stronghold for Egyptian administration, basalt reliefs of fighting animals (lions, bulls) bear the mark of both Canaanite and Egyptian art, although the sanctuary later came under Solomonic (i.e. Israelite) rule. In Canaanite and Egyptian culture, the most popular art form is figurative – animal designs, fertility cult objects and various types of figurine – although decorative floral and geometric art is evident as well. Another good example, because it is so intricately decorated and well preserved, is a cultic stand dating from the tenth century BCE found at Tell Taanach in 1968 (see [Figure 30.4](#)).

However, were these artefacts used not only in Egyptian and Canaanite culture, but also, in later times, by the Israelites as well? This is more than likely, for at least two reasons. First, the references to skilled craftsmen in, for example, Exodus 31:3–4, whose work was ‘to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every craft’ suggests



Figure 30.4 Front view of decorated cultic stand, showing fertility figures and sun disk: from Tell Taanach, tenth century BCE. Copyright Israel Antiquities Authority.

that what may have been a skill in purely decorative art in more orthodox circles could well have developed into the figurative art more akin to that of Israel's neighbours in popular practice. And second, the laws against figurative craftsmanship (e.g. Deuteronomy 16:21–2 and Leviticus 26:1, on not making idols or images or figured stones) suggests that in popular religion such artwork, which inspired fertility practices, was common; for if such art forms could be depicted on public monuments at places such as Samaria, Hazor and Lachish – even though they went against the

grain of the teaching of the law and the prophets – they would undoubtedly have been used in more familial, popular life as well.

The most convincing example of the influence of Canaanite and multicultural art in Israel is in fact in the early Solomonic Temple, dating from the tenth century BCE. Given that Zion (Jerusalem), the city of David, took over the ancient Canaanite site of the Jebusites, and given that the Temple itself was built close to the Canaanite sanctuary, it would be more surprising if some Canaanite artistic influence had not left its mark here. Even the descriptions of the Temple in 1 Kings 5–10, written by those inclined elsewhere to despise foreign influence, depict a good deal of foreign borrowing, both in material goods, in the cedars from Lebanon, and in skilled labour, in the preparation of timber, stone and bronzework by craftsmen from Tyre (see 1 Kings 5:6, 18 and 7:13–14). In architectural design, the Temple had much in common with Canaanite, Syrian and Phoenician prototypes, with its outer and inner courts, and its inner covered sanctuary and the Holy of Holies (see 1 Kings 6). The description of the inner walls, doors and passages covered with sculptured panels of wood with gold inlays, and geometric designs of flowers, gourds, and palm trees certainly points in this direction.

The adaptation of Canaanite art is perhaps most clear in the description of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies; these were figures with human faces and wings – also found in the ivories from Samaria – akin to the winged figures guarding temples in Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Furthermore, in the outer court, the capitals of the two standing pillars, Jachan and Boaz – themselves akin to Canaanite phallic symbols called standing stones – are depicted as adorned with pomegranates, lilies, palm trees, flowers, and gourds, and these too suggest typically Canaanite influence, as do also the fertility figures of the twelve oxen supporting the huge bronze laver for sacrifice nearby.

It is somewhat ironic that the Temple provides the best illustration of all kinds of art, including figurative and symbolic art; or at least, so the texts tell us, for there is no real archeological evidence to support it. And given that so little artwork like it has been found in ancient Israel – either in the texts or from archeological evidence – our observations are necessarily conjectural. But given that the writers were not prone to accept such influence in Israel themselves, there is no reason to suspect their account.

Turning to the New Testament, the archeological evidence for any sort of representational art is minimal, and to make matters worse, even the texts give us very little information. It is more than likely that the second Temple, built in the sixth century BCE and reconstructed by Herod some five hundred years later, had many features in common with the first Solomonic Temple. But the relevant biblical texts have little interest in what it looked like; other than one or two passing comments (see Matthew 23:16–22, on not swearing by ‘the gold of the temple’ and Mark 13:1–2, on its wonderful stones and buildings) there is little to go on.

Excavations at various synagogues have produced some examples of representational art; but again, the mosaics, relief works and frescoes at Masada, Herodium and Gamla, for example, offer no examples of figurative or animal images, such as one would expect to find in contemporary Graeco-Roman culture. The synagogue at Capernaum probably goes further than most: there we find plenty of floral patterns

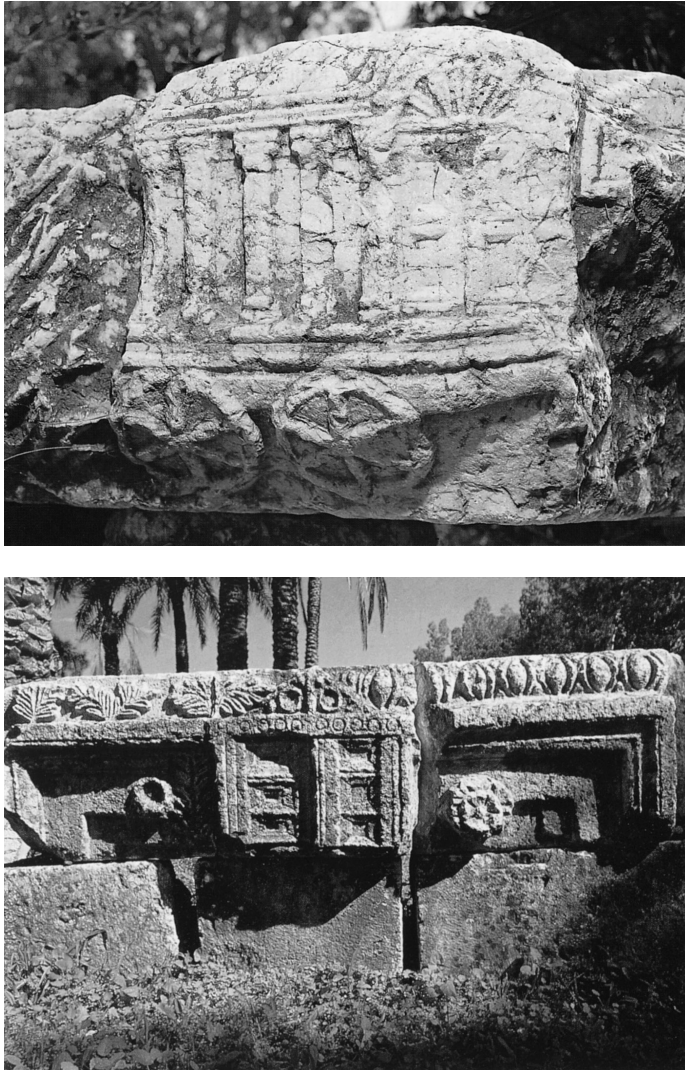


Figure 30.5 The Ark of the Law: from one of the lintels of the first century (or fourth century) CE synagogue at Capernaum. From *Recovering Capernaum* by S. Loffreda (Jerusalem: Edizioni Custodia Terra Santa, 1985). By permission of the Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem.

decorating several lintels, and even a relief of the Ark of the covenant on wheels as part of the same decoration (see [Figure 30.5](#)). On a capital of one of the pillars, a seven-branched candlestick, an incense shovel and a ram's horn are all set within an intricate design of palm trees; in addition, the painted plaster stuccos all have different patterns of fruits and flowers, suggesting fertility imagery adapted from pagan art forms.

It is not until the post-biblical tradition that one finds the real flowering of the representational arts, where figures and theological symbols are used with less

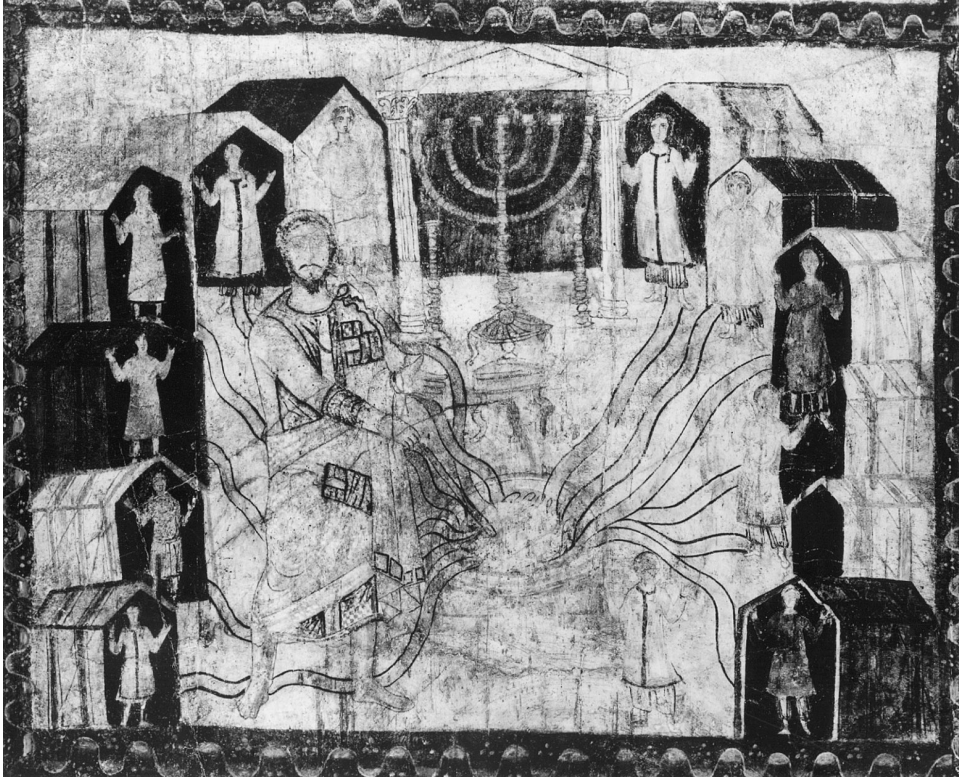


Figure 30.6 Wall painting; the wilderness encampment and the miraculous well of Be'er. Dura-Europos Collection, Yale University Art Gallery.

restraint. One of the first Jewish illustrations dates from the third century CE. In a synagogue in a small Roman town called Dura-Europos, on the river Euphrates, a number of scenes from the entire Old Testament have been found painted on the walls. One of these is of Moses striking water from the rock (see [Figure 30.6](#)). Its larger than life representation of Moses, and the symbolic interpretation of the story (e.g. the addition of the seven-branched candlestick, and the twelve tribal representatives, each in his booth, being apportioned their share of the miraculous water) reveal how far Jewish art had by now progressed. Its ultimate purpose was in fact more didactic than aesthetic. Adorning a synagogue – a place of instruction – the Dura-Europos paintings served to teach the congregation about God's provision at a time of need.

Christian works of art from the same period suggest the same concerns. Some of the earliest are wall-paintings from the Roman catacombs; one striking example is of Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace. Again the figures are simply and crudely drawn, for their purpose is again hardly aesthetic. Symbolic additions may be seen in the sign of the dove, representing God's ever-present Spirit, and in the classical poses of prayer. Their lesson is that, even at times of intense suffering and persecution, God has the power to redeem and save.

From the third century onwards, figurative art began to develop, and the diffidence at employing pagan art forms began to disappear: even the signs of the zodiac are to be found in fourth-century CE synagogues at Hammath Tiberias and Beth 'Alpha. It may be that a less negative view of Graeco-Roman culture influenced this development; it may also be that the developing Christian artistic tradition also encouraged Jewish creativity along the way. For from the third century onwards, Christian symbols such as the dove, fish, bread, grapes, olive branch, ship and anchor all became popular signs of faith (many of these having been found in the catacombs).

By the Middle Ages a most innovative tradition developed in both Jewish and Christian traditions – the illumination of biblical manuscripts. Whereas previously the text alone was seen as the most vital resource for faith, that very same text is now presented alongside decorative illustrations, many of which are purely figurative art. This was quite a change from biblical times when artistic expression – at least in orthodox circles – was reserved for decorative art alone.

PERFORMING ARTS AND THE BIBLE: AN ASSESSMENT OF MUSIC AND DRAMATIC RITUAL

One quite early text gives us a clue about the importance of music in the life of ancient Israel. Genesis 4:20–2, written as ancient aetiological explanation of the three basic 'skills' (the first smith, Tubal-cain, the first cattlebreeder, Jabal, and the first musician, Jubal) has some correspondences with an early Sumerian myth entitled *Tagtug and Dilmun*. The Genesis passage shows that music was considered among the most ancient of occupations in Israel, even more so before the advent of poetry and song. Whether in percussive sounds (such as beating with a stick on stone, wood, or animal skin) or in sounds made by the breath (using mouths and lips with leaves, animal horns, hollowed wood) or in sounds created by crudely made stringed instruments (using animal gut from hunting bows to create instruments like the harp and lyre), music was a fundamental performative art throughout the ancient world; hence it would be surprising to find Israel exceptional in this respect. If, in spite of the teaching in the Ten Commandments, Israel could adapt (albeit selectively) some of the forms of the decorative arts, there was surely scope to adapt some of the performing arts as well.

It is unclear whether music was used as an accompaniment to secular songs. Certainly battle songs (e.g. Exodus 15:21 and 17:16) and working songs (e.g. Numbers 21:17–18) and love songs (e.g. Song of Songs) were in popular use, but there are few suggestions of any musical accompaniment in such references. It is more probable that the essential place for music was in accompanying liturgy. Certainly the importance of music in worship is evidenced by drawings in other ancient cultures, such as in Syro-Palestine, Egypt and Babylon. The lack of graphic illustration in the biblical tradition makes us dependent upon these other cultures for our knowledge of which instruments were probably used in Israel's worship. For example, the trumpet was probably brought to Israel from Egypt (as depicted on a relief on a stele from Ramases II in the thirteenth century BCE), and the horn was



Figure 30.7 An Assyrian military band with tambourines, lyres and cymbals: alabaster relief from Assurbanipal's palace at Nineveh, seventh century BCE. From *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* by Othmar Keel (ET of original German edn; London: SPCK, 1978). By permission of Othmar Keel.

first used in Egypt, Assyria and Babylon. Tambourines, lyres and cymbals were also borrowed from other cultures (see [Figure 30.7](#)).

Within the biblical tradition, the psalms offer us the best examples of the use of music in worship. The word *šîr*, meaning 'song', is used almost forty times in the Psalter. The word 'psalm' is taken from the Greek word *psalmos*, which is a translation of the Hebrew *mizmôr*, meaning 'a song to a stringed instrument'. The word *lamⁿnaššêah*, meaning 'to the choirmaster', is used in the headings of fifty-five psalms. Asaph (a heading for Psalms 50, 73–83) and Korah (heading Psalms 42, 44–9, 84–5, 87–8) are probably guilds of Levitical musicians. Phrases in superscriptions such as 'Do Not Destroy' (Psalms 57–9, 75) and 'Dove of the Far-Off Terebinths' (Psalm 56) and 'Hind of the Dawn' (Psalm 22) and 'Lilies' (Psalms 45, 69, 80) and 'Gittith' (Psalms 8, 81, 84) and 'Shushan Eduth' (Psalm 60) almost certainly suggest the tunes – whether originally popular profane tunes is unclear – to which the psalms should be sung. Musical instruments are of course evident: these include the 'flute' (Psalm 5), the 'pipes' (Psalm 150), the 'trumpet' (Psalm 47), the 'sheminith' – probably an eight-stringed instrument – (Psalms 6, 12), 'stringed instruments' (Psalms 4, 6, 54, 55, 67, 76), the 'lyre' (Psalm 33), the 'harp' (Psalms 57 and 150), the 'cymbals' (Psalm 150) and the 'timbrels' (Psalms 81, 149 and 150). There are even possible references to male and female voices: the expression '*al-mût labên*' in Psalm 9 may indicate a male soprano, and the term '*al-ⁿalāmôt*' in Psalm 46 could suggest the accompanying voices of women. The term *selâh* used seventy-one times in thirty-nine psalms, is also probably a musical term. It always occurs in the middle or at the end of a verse, often following a refrain. This suggests it is a music notation, occurring at the end of a phrase: it could be from the word *s-l-l*, meaning 'raise'

(hands, voice, eyes) or the root s-l-h, meaning 'bow down' or 'prostrate oneself' in worship, or the noun *sal*, meaning basket or drum, indicating the rhythmic beat of the psalm. The Greek translates this word as *diapsalma* – meaning 'pause' – that is, an interlude in the performance of the psalm. Whichever meaning is preferred, it is hard to interpret *selāh* in any other way than as a musical term.

However, with regard to the rituals and dramatic enactments that would accompany music and psalmody in liturgy, very little can be known with any certainty. The psalms are compositions without any of the rubrics we might find in a more modern prayer book: the absence of any explanation of the ritual activities accompanying the words thus means it is extremely difficult to reconstruct the liturgical performances. We can try to reconstruct some form of drama by way of reading into the contents of various psalms – for example, ritual processions of the Ark paraded into Jerusalem (see 2 Samuel 5–6 for the narrative, and Psalms 24, 68 and 132); different coronation rites involving the king (Psalms 2, 72 and 110); special festal activities that took place at the turn of a new year (Psalms 50 and 81); national celebrations at times of victory in war (Psalms 21, 46 and 48); and sacrifices and oblations accompanying more individual psalms (Psalm 134). But all we really can say is that because ritual and drama were very much part of ancient Near Eastern liturgy, what happened elsewhere almost certainly would have happened in Israel as well. For example, the use of processions, involving the king and his cultic officials, with the men, women and children following behind, is documented on other ancient Near Eastern reliefs and steles (see [Figure 30.8](#)). It is impossible to deny that, alongside music and song, ritualized and dramatized liturgy from other cultures would have been adopted in Israel as well.

Within the New Testament, there is very little explicit evidence of *any* performing art, be it music, drama or song. In part, this may be due to a negative reaction to the pagan grandeur of Roman culture; in part it may be due to the growing importance of synagogue worship, for these were not so much places of music as of the reading and recitation of Scripture. Luke 7:32 and Matthew 11:7 refer to the performance of flutes and dances, but even these refer more to secular music, and so give no evidence of the wider use of music and ritual in liturgy. Ephesians 5:19 speaks of the importance of Christian songs and melodies; and parts of Revelation (4:11, 5:9–11, 7:15–17 and 11: 17–18) are imitations of psalmody, as also are parts of Luke 1–2 (from which come the *Nunc Dimittis* and the *Magnificat*). Together these fragments certainly imply the use of hymnody in liturgy; nevertheless, although they demonstrate the importance of singing, they do not give any details of musical or dramatic accompaniment.

However, when we look at the post-biblical tradition, as we did with regard to the figurative arts, we again see that the performing arts – especially those concerned with music – became more conspicuous by the time of Constantine (fourth century CE) onwards. From this time on, there is more evidence to show how music made a distinctive contribution to early Jewish and Christian liturgy, where (rather like the illumination of manuscripts some time later) the syntax was brought to life through musical accompaniment.

For example, in Jewish tradition, it seems that the use of certain *sigla* in the copied texts of the Hebrew Bible suggests some commonly acknowledged musical



Figure 30.8 'The solemn processions of my God, into the sanctuary – the singers in front, the minstrels last' (Ps. 68). Stele from Ramases II, Abydos, thirteenth century BCE. From *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* by Othmar Keel (ET of original German edn; London: SPCK, 1978). By permission of Othmar Keel.

notation, describing pitches and tones for singing, and these may be dated from at least the second century CE onwards. The fact that these are used in a distinctive way in poetic books such as Psalms, Proverbs and Job might well suggest that this sort of poetry was most suitable for musical adaptation. The rise in Palestine of a group of Jewish singers in the fourth to fifth centuries called *piyyuṭim* – composers and singers of new liturgical prayers and hymns for sabbaths and holy days – also shows that the musical tradition of the Old Testament continued to progress; and by the medieval period, musical notation in Jewish liturgy had developed into a most complicated system of performing art.

In Christian tradition, musical interpretation through melodic and tonal singing of psalms probably began as early as the second century CE. The tradition of the fourteen canticles (e.g. Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 32; 1 Samuel 2; Habakkuk 3; Isaiah 26; Jonah 2; Daniel 3, and two apocryphal additions, namely the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men; Isaiah 38; the apocryphal Prayer of Manasseh; Luke 1:68–79 and 46–55; Luke 2:29–32; and the Gloria) is attested by the time of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604 CE), and these canticles, along with the Psalms, were performed as *plainsong*, or ‘sung-speech’. The language used was of course Latin; but the flexible line-forms of the poetry, allowing an ‘ascent’ (the first recit and cadence) a pause (the mediant) and a ‘descent’ (the second recit and cadence) made plainsong particularly evocative.

Our conclusions follow those of our earlier section. It seems that during its earliest stages, Jewish and Christian culture was essentially word-based and text-based. Within the biblical tradition itself, the world of music, like the world of art, though implicitly important, is very difficult to ascertain in detail, but in the post-biblical tradition music, like art, became a vital means of bringing the text to life.

LITERARY ARTS AND THE BIBLE: AN ASSESSMENT OF POETRY AND PSALMODY

One problem in assessing the importance of poetry in the literature of the Old Testament is deciding what may be classified as poetry and what as prose, for the boundaries between the two are blurred. In part, it is the performative quality of poetry that distinguishes it from prose: one has only to compare the poetic account celebrating the victory over the Egyptians in Exodus 15:1, 4–6 (the so-called ‘Song of the Sea’) with the parallel narrative account in Exodus 14:26–9 to recognize this difference; similarly, the poetic victory song in Judges 5:24–7 (‘Deborah’s Song’) and the parallel narrative account in Judges 4:18–21 illustrates this well.

But this only works in part, for reading prose may be a performing art as well (e.g. the reading from the Torah as synagogal practice). Hebrew poetry has some distinctive features, such as a terser style, more figurative imagery, phonetic devices, archaisms, word-pairing (balancing phrases by way of repetition or by contrast) and a clearer division of the material into line-forms, although the difference between prose and poetry is more one of degree than of kind.

There are in fact two essential characteristics that mark out Semitic poetry from prose. One lies in the *sense*, or the presentation of the ideas in parallel, corresponding

line-forms. The other lies in the *sound*, or in the rhythmic way in which those ideas are heard. Together these suggest that biblical poetry was composed to be performed: the words are the 'performing art'. The terse style beomes an aid to memory, and this is reinforced by the ways in which the words are spoken (or sung) and heard.

Characteristically, the ancient Israelites adapted a good deal from the ancient Near Eastern cultures around them. In the cases of the representational and performative arts, we have seen that one early influence was Canaanite culture; it should be no surprise, therefore, to find that this influence is also found in Israelite poetry, both in terms of sense and of sound.

In terms of the sense, the brief binary line-forms have many correspondences with Canaanite poetry. Epic poems written in Ugaritic, dating from between the fourteenth and twelfth centuries BCE, found at Ras Shamra in Syria, suggest many associations with the later poems of the Hebrew Bible, not only in their contrasting word pairs (such as light / darkness; sea / river; earth / deep; death / life; tent / dwelling; justice / righteousness) but also in their accentual stresses (2:2, 3:3; and so on) in the line-forms. One intriguing example, taken from a poem called *Ba'al and 'Anat Cycle* (CTA 2.iv.8–9), has close links with Psalm 92:9, in terms of line-forms, its 3:3 stress, and even its language.

now,	thine enemies	O Ba'l
ht	ibk	b'lm
now,	thine enemies	thou shalt smite
ht	ibk	tmḥṣ
now,	thou shalt destroy	thy foes . . .
ht	tṣmt	ṣrtk
(Ba'al and 'Anat Cycle)		
For lo,	thy enemies,	O Lord,
for lo,	thy enemies	shall perish
all evil-	doers	shall be scattered.
(Psalm 92:9)		

As well as the form, the contents of several Old Testament poems reveal many of the themes found in Ugaritic poetry. Various psalms borrow their creation imagery from earlier Canaanite mythology, whether depicting God as the rider of the clouds (Psalm 104:3), as the king or judge in a heavenly council (Psalms 89:6–7; 82:1), as the one enthroned above the floods (Psalm 93:1–4), as the Lord dwelling on a mountain (Psalm 68:16), as the judge of the nations (Psalm 2:1–3, 10–11; 46:8–10), as the Most High God (Psalms 46:4 and 47:2) or as the God of the storm. In this latter respect, Psalm 29 as a whole is very much like a Canaanite hymn to Ba'al-Hadad, the storm-god. The sevenfold voice of God, the appearance of God through the clouds, the references to the cedars of Lebanon and Syron (from which Ba'al's temple was built) all echo similar motifs in the Canaanite hymn. This is not to presume any exclusive relationship between the biblical poets and the poets of Canaan: much of this imagery (e.g. lightning as fire and the thunder as the voice of

God) was commonly used throughout the ancient world, as can be seen on a seal as early as the eighteenth century BCE from Syria.

Ideas found in other hymns have much in common with other ancient Near Eastern hymns, particularly those from Egypt and Babylon, illustrating a shared cultural milieu. For example, a common ancient Near Eastern myth about the creation of the world being linked to the deity's fight with a dragon of the sea, known to the Babylonians and the Canaanites, is referred to explicitly in Psalms 74:12–17 and 89:5–10. The [first part](#) of Psalm 19A is a hymn to God as the creator of the sun. Not only in form but also in content it has many affinities in its imagery with a Babylonian hymn to the sun-god, Shamesh: the sun emerges as a bridegroom coming out of his 'tent', circling the earth through the daylight hours, and is personified as a 'strong man' (see Psalm 19:4c–6). Again, that this is part of a much larger culture is clear: the same scene is depicted on a cylinder seal from Mesopotamia, dating between 2350 and 2150 BCE.

Psalm 104, like 19A, is a hymn to God as creator of the sun: as well as having some Canaanite correspondences, verses 20–30 have several striking affinities with the Egyptian Hymn to Aton, found at Tell el-Amarna:

Thou settest every man in his place,
Thou suppliest their necessities:
Everyone has his food, and his time of life is reckoned . . .
The world came into being by thy hand,
According as thou hast made them.
When thou hast risen they live,
When thou settest they die.
Thou art lifetime thy own self,
For one lives [only] through thee.

(from *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*
[3rd edn with Supplement], ed. J. B. Pritchard, Princeton
University Press, Princeton N.J., 1969, pp. 370–1)

These all look to thee,
to give them their food in due season.
When thou givest to them, they gather it up;
When thou openest thy hand,
they are filled with good things.
When thou hidest thy face, they are dismayed;
When thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust.
When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created;
and thou renewest the face of the ground.
(Psalm 104:27–30 RSV)

Laments also have much in common, not only in terms of form but also of substance, with those from Egypt and Babylon. The terror of destructive forces, often personified (Psalm 102:3–11), the imagery of being near death, and being trapped in a pit or grave (Psalm 143:7), the sense of drowning in deep waters (Psalm 69:1–3),

of being parched as in the desert (Psalms 63:1 and 42:1–2) – all these are descriptions of distress commonly used in laments throughout the ancient Near East. A cylinder seal from Babylon, dating from about 1800 BCE, illustrates figuratively this common perception of being in the grip of chaotic forces.

With regard to Israelite poetry in its own setting, as we have already noted, much Old Testament poetry was performed on special liturgical occasions, whether at local sanctuaries or at the Jerusalem Temple. This is the case even with poetry outside the Psalter. A good example is the so-called ‘Aaronic Blessing’ found in Numbers 6:24–6 (RSV):

‘The LORD bless you and keep you:
The LORD make his face to shine
upon you, and be gracious to you:
The LORD lift up his countenance
upon you, and give you peace.

Although this is described as a blessing offered by the priests, its early use in popular piety is illustrated by a seventh-century amulet, found in 1979 in a seventh-century tomb in S.W. Jerusalem, bearing some of the words of this blessing.

But what were the characteristics of literary poetry? The following examples (all from the RSV) illustrate ‘parallelism’ – the balance of sense in the line-forms, whereby repeated or contrasting images in a second line reinforce, positively or negatively, the idea expressed in the first line. Where straightforward repetition occurs, we may term it A + A, B + B, and so on. An example from Amos 8:9–10 illustrates this point:

{ . . . and on that day, says the Lord GOD}	
‘I will make the sun go down at noon,	A
and darken the earth in broad daylight.	A
I will turn your feasts into mourning,	B
and all your songs into lamentation . . .’	B

Psalm 33:10–11 is another good illustration of this:

The LORD brings to nought the counsel of the nations;	A
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.	A
The counsel of the LORD stands for ever,	B
the thoughts of his heart to all generations.	B

Where contrasting ideas are presented, we may term this A + B, C + D, and so on. One example is found in Proverbs 3:33:

The LORD’s curse is on the house of the wicked,	A
but he blesses the abode of the righteous.	B

Similarly Psalm 30:5:

For his anger is but for a moment,	A
and his favour for a lifetime.	B
Weeping may tarry for the night,	C
but joy comes with the morning.	D

Obviously there are many more permutations of this basic model, and not every line-form corresponds as closely as do the above examples. One development is the partial statement of an idea in one line, with the completion of it taking place in the next (A>B) – what some have called ‘staircase parallelism’. The call to praise in Psalm 29:1–2, a creation psalm, is a good illustration, with the third line being a repetition of the second, and the fourth a development of it:

Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,	A>
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength:	B
Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;	B>
worship the LORD in holy array.	C

As far as sound in Hebrew poetry is concerned, phonetic devices consist of assonance, alliteration, rhyme and word-play. For example, ‘â’ ‘î’ and ‘û’ sounds – usually found at the ends of words – are an important technique in creating the impression of wailing in laments; a good example is found in Jeremiah 9:19:

For a sound of wailing is heard from Zion:
‘How we are ruined (*êk šuddāḏ^enû*)!
We are utterly shamed (*bōš^{nû} m^eōḏ*),
because we have left the land (*kî-‘azab^{nû} ‘āreṣ*),
because they have cast down our dwellings (*kî-hišlîk^û miš^kenôṭenû*).’

Sharp consonants such as ‘š’ and ‘ḥ’ and ‘k’ and ‘t’ are also used for dramatic purposes. In Psalm 140:3 they illustrate the hissing and spitting of the serpents:

They make their tongue sharp	as a serpent’s
<i>šān^{nû} l’šônām</i>	<i>k^emô-nāḥāš</i>
and under their lips	is the poison of vipers
<i>ḥ^amat^ṣ aḥšûḥ</i>	<i>taḥat^ṣ s^epāṭēmô</i> .

Onomatopoeia is used in some of the poems about God’s creative power. Psalm 93:4 illustrates this, with the use of ‘îm’ and ‘ām’ and ‘ôṭ’ suggesting the sound of the floods and seas:

Mightier than	the thunders of many waters
<i>miqqōlôṭ</i>	<i>mayim rabbîm</i>
Mightier than	the waves of the sea
<i>‘addîrîm</i>	<i>mišb^rê yām</i> .

Word-play, another phonetic device, is used mainly by the prophets; Isaiah 5:7 is a good example:

... and he looked for justice	(l ^e <i>mišpāṭ</i>),
but behold, bloodshed	(<i>mišpāḥ</i>):
for righteousness	(liṣ ^e <i>dāqā</i>)
but behold, a cry!	(ṣ ^e <i>āqā</i>)

Despite the importance of the sound of Hebrew poetry, it is extremely difficult to find any clear evidence of *metrical* patterns. Scholars who have proposed a regular metre have not only been up against uncertainty about the original pronunciation of Hebrew poetry, but have postulated such contradictory hypothetical theories (some counting syllables, others forcing the rhythm into iambic metre, with the stress falling on the second syllable) that it is best to speak instead of a free accentual rhythm, created mainly by the intensification of the binary ideas. No absolute metre exists, although usually some sort of regular rhythm is detectable: for example, hymnic poetry often can be read in terms of a 3:3 or a 2:2 accentual beat, while by contrast poems of lament often have a more halting 3:2 accentual beat. Nevertheless, this is rhythm, not metre, because it is so fluid and flexible. For example, a 2:2 beat (not metre) is evident in Psalm 29. The hymn is to Yahweh, as God of the storm, and here the beat is intended to suggest the relentless noise of the storm; for example, verse 3:

The voice	of the LORD
qôl-	ʾaḏōnay
is upon	the waters
ʿal-	hammāyim
The God of	glory
ēl-	hākkābōd
thun	ders
hir	ʾim
The LORD is	above
ʾaḏōnay	ʿal-
many	waters
mayim	rabbîm.

The halting beat 3:2 is more characteristic of laments. Psalm 5 is a good example; taking the English without the transliterated Hebrew, using verses 1–2, the beat would appear as follows:

Give ear to	my words, O LORD
give heed	to my groaning.
Hearken	to the sound of my cry
my King	and my God.

1. Hymns

General Hymns: 8, 29; 33; 100; 103; 104; 111; 113; 114; 117; 135; 136; 145; 146; 147; 148; 149; 150

Also: 78, 105.

Zion Hymns: 46; 48; 76; 87; 122.

Kingship Hymns: 47; 93; 96; 97; 98; 99.

2. Laments

Individual Laments: 3; 5; 6; 7; 12; 13; 17; 22; 25; 26; 28; 31; 35; 36; 38; 39; 42–3; 51; 54; 55; 56; 57; 59; 61; 63; 64; 69; 70; 71; 86; 102; 109; 120; 130; 140; 141; 142; 143.

Communal Laments: 44; 60; 74; 77; 79; 80; 82; 83; 85; 90; 94; 106; 108; 123; 126; 137.

3. Miscellaneous Forms

Royal Psalms: 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144.

Individual Thanksgiving: 9–10; 30; 32; 34; 40; 41; 92; 107; 116; 138.

Communal Thanksgiving: 65; 66; 67; 68; 118; 124.

Individual Psalms of Confidence: 4; 11; 16; 23; 27; 61; 84; 91; 121; 131.

Communal Psalms of Confidence: 115; 125; 129; 133.

Liturgies: 15; 24; 134.

Prophetic Exhortations: 14; 50; 52; 53; 58; 75; 81; 95.

Didactic Psalms: 1; 19; 37; 49; 73; 112; 119; 127; 128; 139.

Figure 30.9 The forms of the Psalter. From *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible* by S. E. Gillingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). By permission of Oxford University Press.

Many scholars who presume there is some regular metre in Hebrew poetry also work on the assumption that it follows the same rules as those of classical verse. But Hebrew and Greek poetry are very different. Hebrew poetry is more terse and economical, yet also impassioned and irregular in its expression of ideas, while on the whole Greek poetry is more flowing, controlled and harmonious, with a more copious and consistent metrical pattern.

In biblical poetry, then, the sound brings the sense to life. The fact that ‘parallelism of sense’ is the most important characteristic has an interesting consequence: Hebrew poetry does not altogether lose its essence even when it is translated into non-Semitic languages such as Greek, Latin and English.

One of the other features about Hebrew poetry that we find especially in the Psalter is the use of *conventional forms* (see [Figure 30.9](#)). Hymns and laments dominate just as they do within the poetry of other ancient Near Eastern cultures, such as in Egypt and Babylon. The *hymns* fall into three categories: general praise, hymns celebrating God’s presence in Zion, and hymns celebrating the kingship of God in the heavens and on the earth. These all follow a broadly similar pattern: a call to praise, a description of the reasons for praise, and a final call to praise. The *laments*

fall into two categories of individual and communal petitions, although it is clear that the 'I' form is used in both categories and the dividing-line between prayers of the individual and prayers of the community is somewhat blurred. Most laments also follow a similar pattern: a cry for help, the reasons for the distress, and a vow of confidence that God will act. The most common *miscellaneous forms* fall into two basic types: individual and communal *thanksgivings* (thanking God for specific acts of restoration, these are more particular adaptations of the general hymns of praise) and individual and communal psalms of *confidence* (which are prayers as yet unanswered). The prophetic exhortations are essentially didactic poems using oracular teaching typical of the prophets. Prophetic oracles are also found in several royal psalms (see Psalms 2:7–9; 89:19–37; 110:4) but overall royal psalms are an unusual category, for they are classified according to their content (their subject matter pertains to the affairs of king and people) rather than because they share any special form. The liturgies are composite works, suggesting various rituals. The didactic psalms suggest the later influence of those sages and scribes who were gifted in writing didactic, reflective poetry: in contrast to the royal psalms and liturgies, whose concerns are more public and formal, these didactic psalms are more meditative and personal in their tone.

There is plenty of evidence of these forms elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, showing this to be an established part of Israel's literary heritage. Psalmic poetry influenced other writers; and other biblical writers influenced the composers of the psalms. For example, hymns and thanksgivings are prominent in Isaiah 40–55, where they are used to evoke hope in God's restoration of his people. The lament form is used to great effect in the book of Jeremiah, where it dramatizes the sufferings of the people. Poems that speak of a coming royal deliverer develop the language and style of the royal psalms (see Isaiah 9:2–7 and 11:1–9). Hymns and laments are further used together for dramatic purposes, to highlight a particular message, in books with interests as diverse as prophecy (Amos) and wisdom (Job). The didactic psalms have some correspondences with the poetry in Proverbs, and especially in the much later book of Ecclesiasticus.

When we come to apply these observations to the New Testament, the results are very different because, by contrast, there is far more narrative and very little poetry, and the medium is Greek, not Hebrew. Narrative form predominates in the Gospels and Acts (one exception already noted being Luke 1–2, where the poetry imitates the psalmody). Although the more hortatory style of the Epistles is interspersed with some poetic fragments, many of these are simply quotations from the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) as seen, for example, in Romans 8:36, taken from Psalm 44:22; in Romans 9:25–6, from Hosea 2:23 and 1:10; and in Romans 10:19–21, taken from Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1–2. In these cases the style is hardly continuously poetic. What fragments of Greek poetry there are come from quotations of Greek philosophers – for example, Epimenides and Aratus in Acts 17:28.

The really clear evidence of New Testament poetry is found in some of the poetic aphorisms in the Gospels; these may be part of an oral tradition going back to the sayings of Jesus, and so, if they were originally spoken, they would not have been in Greek, but in vernacular Aramaic – a language closely related to Hebrew and

hence possibly like Hebrew poetry as well. The terse style, the word-pairing, the balance of particular phrases, the possible division of the material into line-forms, their performative, hortatory nature, rather like the preaching of some of the earlier Old Testament prophets – all these suggest the characteristics of poetry, not prose. Most of these sayings have clear ethical concerns; taking Luke as a source (for the Gospel of Luke has more interest in poetry, as seen in the psalmic imitations in Luke 1–2) three examples (all from the RSV) must suffice. First, the appeal to love one's enemies in Luke 6:27, set out in appropriate parallelism:

Love your enemies,	A
do good to those who hate you,	A
Bless those who curse you,	B
pray for those who abuse you.	B

Second, the injunction not to judge in Luke 6:37–8 (Matthew 7:1–2):

Judge not, and you will not be judged;	A
condemn not, and you will not be condemned;	A
forgive, and you will be forgiven;	B
give, and it will be given to you.	B

Third, the exhortation to lose one's life for Christ's sake, in Luke 9:24 (Matthew 16:25; Mark 8:35), which uses contrasting parallelism:

For whoever would save his life will lose it;	A
and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it.	B

Just as we saw with representational and performative art, the post-biblical tradition offers many examples of poetry and in this case is in more continuity with the already established biblical tradition. The imitations of poetry and psalmody found in the so-called *Hodayôt* at Qumran offer good examples of this in the Jewish tradition; and in the Christian tradition, examples are found in the ways in which poets as diverse as Herbert, Wesley, Watts, Wyatt, Vaughan, Milton, Lyte, Keble, and Tate and Brady have developed the Psalms in English to create new forms of hymnody. This of course relates to what was said earlier about the importance in the biblical period of communication through texts and words, and so this art form perpetuates the biblical tradition itself.

CONCLUSION

From the limited textual and archeological evidence, the *representational arts* were apparently less important in biblical times than they were in the post-biblical period, particularly with regard to figurative and symbolic art. The most evidence comes from the earlier period before the exile; there is much less actual evidence of any artwork beyond the exile itself. By contrast, there is a little more textual evidence – mainly from the references to music and liturgy in the Psalms – that the

performative arts were important (at least, they were so in the Temple) throughout the biblical period. But the only clear and compelling evidence within the Bible itself is from the *literary arts*, in terms of a clearly established tradition of poetry, and even here the Old Testament has more of this than the New.

By post-biblical times we have innumerable examples of the different ways in which artistic expression served to bring the texts to life. This may be in part due to the element of the numinous inherent in the message of the Bible, which ultimately required another form of expression than that by word of mouth and word of text. Given that the purpose of religious language is to describe other-worldly realities in temporal and spatial terms – realities that can never be contained by words alone – there is always an element of mystery in communicating the story of God revealing himself to humankind, and other art forms are an essential reminder of the importance of communication of religious mysteries in symbols beyond words alone. This recognition was of course evident in biblical times, but it was notably constrained, because the spoken and written words were paramount. Interestingly, it was only after the literature had been compiled, collected and recognized by different communities of faith that Jews and Christians started to borrow more boldly from the ‘pagan’ forms of arts – using more freely the music, drama, sculpture, painting and iconography of surrounding cultures. It was as if in biblical times the ban on such borrowing (as exemplified in the Second Commandment) was to ensure the survival of faith; and, paradoxically, it was as if in post-biblical times such a ban had to be lifted for that very same reason – the survival of faith.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

LAW AND ADMINISTRATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLD



J. Duncan M. Derrett

INTRODUCTION

Modern Western readers, understanding the New Testament to be about behaviour, its amelioration, and God, would ask how far it reflects their expectations. The authors (e.g. Paul) presupposed both Graeco-Roman and Jewish ideas of sin, civil wrong, crime, punishment, and reprieve – all foreign to us; though any who have lived in territories ruled by Muslims will feel at home in the New Testament. A democratic state takes for granted schools of law and administration, verifiable collections of statutes, treatises on them, and advocacy as a profession. The application and amendment of law follows a due process, and the Rule of Law prevails. The New Testament world knew little of this, though admittedly Greeks and Romans had statutes and knew the use and abuse of advocacy; codes of *parts* of Greek laws in Egypt were framed; and Egyptian priests produced one manual of legal solutions. Jews knew what non-Israelite judges did; but while pagans were familiar with ‘rights’ Jews emphasized ‘duties’, hoping thereby to perform the divine ‘commandments’. God had done their legislating for them.

Nevertheless in public they relied on patrons. One succeeded less by appealing to rights than by petitioning those who wielded extra-legal pressure. Legal entitlement was proverbially insecure. The widow and orphan had reason to fear oppression. Moreover Jews did not rely on contractual rights as Romans did. The modern concept of the Rule of Law, too, was foreign to them. Solidarity and reciprocity were more meaningful. The non-Israelite (pagan) world was ‘profane’ to Jews, so that it was a serious question whether people should return to a pagan property he had lost. If the panoply of law meant more in Greece and Rome, ‘equality before the law’ existed nowhere. Law, best avoided, was a lottery everywhere.

About AD 200 R. Judah the Prince began the compilation of the Mishnah, which contains very many legal and extra-legal precepts, loosely based on the Written Torah (the Pentateuch) and the Oral Law, traditions of various ages: some Mishnaic rules already existed in our period. The Mishnah was intended to inculcate a more scrupulous Judaism, a ‘way of life’ (*halakha*) surviving the loss of the Temple in AD 70 and the despoiling of the country by the Romans, thus rescuing the image of an ideal theocracy from oblivion and rejecting tendencies to assimilate to the pagan

world. In the 'order' *Neziqîn* (Damages) and elsewhere true legal problems are handled, along with many outside any court's scope, for example impurity by reason of contiguity to a corpse, circumcision, and ritual immersions. The preferences of the '(ignorant) People of the Land', who opted not to be too scrupulous, were ignored. Few of the now traditional 613 Commandments came before courts. However, though sons could seldom be compelled to 'Honour Father and Mother', one could be flogged for cursing a parent in an Israelite if not in a Greek court; and blasphemy was a criminal offence. Pagans and Jews alike valued jurists, who studied legal theory as an adjunct to justice. A Jewish jurist would ask whether a rule was derived from scripture, and how. Since worship of an idol was forbidden, might an Israelite sit in the shade of a sacred grove? This illustrates a jurist's, not a judge's, problem. The 'replies' of jurists were at best a possible source of law, for judges could decline to follow them. Unlike Greeks, Israelites, who had God's commandments supplemented by the legendary arrangements of Moses and Joshua, saw no point in statutes, for their Torah was perfect. Rabbis (or their first-century predecessors) knew what 'was done', and what not. Political authority was powerless to develop *halakha*, whatever orders might be circulated to state judges.

SOURCES OF POWER

To both Greeks and Israelites 'power' meant 'the unconstrained capacity to do (something)'. The emperor (Nerva was a good example), the principal power-holder, his delegates, governors of Roman provinces (e.g. the proconsul of Achaëa), and tetrarchs (e.g. Herod Antipas of Galilee) exercised legal power constitutionally. Pontius Pilate was *praefectus* (governor) of Judaea AD 26–36. Greeks and Romans operated a chain of command in civil and military affairs such as Jews could only envy. Greek cities were decaying democracies; decision by majority hovered in Roman and Greek politics, and figured in some law trials; but Jews eschewed majority decision except in Alexandria, and (one is told) important trials. It was also a means of terminating a juristic controversy, but it was an exotic expedient. To them 'power' was *de facto* control, autocratic and irresponsible, even if Roman officials might have to answer to the emperor. Rule in Palestine was visualized as arbitrary and opportunistic: rulers were thought to have much in common with demons. The fantasy that God ruled Israel through a king descended from David inspired would-be revolutionaries: but even supernatural leadership would not be democratic.

Jewish families obeyed the senior most active male, who answered for females (see Gen 18:13), and villages were run by 'elders'. The real leaders were 'notables', the most competent, therefore the richest, who represented none but themselves. The 'powerful', once in possession of a district, might summon matrons, not to speak of virgins, to their beds, and were 'righteous' if they abstained. Under Rome the significant ruler was the High Priest, whom Rome, following Herod the Great, appointed or deposed. He represented the state *vis-à-vis* foreigners and attempted to maintain order at home. Chief priests could nominate even generals through nepotism. Without a true personal authority (such as the emperor had) Israelites were virtually acephalous. The hereditary priesthood, often maligned, held a prestige derived from their monopoly of the Temple service. In the diarchy between High Priests

and Romans, Caiaphas, High Priest AD 18–36, proved it could succeed. Inhabitants of Jerusalem (if Jewish) were respected as sophisticates.

No 'elder', 'ruler', or 'notable', even in the supreme court (Sanhedrin), was elected, or appointed under a discoverable system. Expediency and bargaining facilitated coalescence. The bureaucracy of Egypt, even imperial censuses, will have had counterparts in Judaea, but apart from the Bar Kokhba letters we lack archives. In general, consensus was desired, preferences being traded for influence. Sheer force restrained protests, and the rich fed on the poor (cf. Am 8:4–7). Sacred scripture continually pleads for the oppressed. It depicts abuse of powers even by Saul and David. It tenders Ahab and Jezebel as a royal pair. First-century Israelites expected no better. The story of Eli and his sons (1 Sam 2) already asks how one controls priestly corruption.

Romans, for their part, could 'divide and rule'. In AD 41 Rome decided against Jewish pretensions in Alexandria and later destroyed Jewish rights in Egypt. Rome taxed all Jews as such between AD 70 and c. 150. Israelites hated Samaritans, and demanded equal treatment with Greeks wherever they were coresident, to the latter's annoyance. Apart from Jews abandoning the *halakha* to serve government, a pool of collaborators existed to help put down Jewish revolutionary fervour. This erupted throughout the imperial procurators' time (AD 44–66), after Herod Agrippa I, whose calm reign (AD 41–4) owed something to his respect both for Israelite scrupulosity and pagan broadmindedness.

LEGAL SYSTEMS

Let Roman and the various Greek constitutions differ, Jewish and non-Jewish laws diverged in point of sources, content, and administration. Despite the reputation of Rhodes and Priene, the whole world was short of reliable arbiters. In Palestine all classes were subject to foreign rule; the governor kept turbulent mobs in order with foreign troops and tried to settle disputes, political and legal. Granted, a tendency intensified after AD 70 and the collapse of Israelite autonomy in 135, to ape Westerners' ways, separate living and endogamy encouraged the promulgators of the Mishnah to consolidate Israelite rules, whether these, and these alone, would be applied to Jews, or not. There was no Roman colony in Palestine. Roman private law was not at hand to study or imitate, even if Herod the Great found a Roman to sit along with Jews at a show trial. Israelite effort was put into defining the *halakha*. Roman citizens could appeal to the emperor in private-law cases.

In modern colonial territories a 'dominant' legal system countenances and encourages one or more 'servient' systems (e.g. the Islamic *shari'a* and customs) – a practical arrangement. Procurators of Judaea maintained Jewish law and custom under imperial policy, and natives took judicial responsibility. Romans could seldom make anything of a Jewish law claiming divine origin (an idea foreign to both Greece and Rome). Matters of Israelite religion were outside their jurisdiction, though it might interfere sharply with Roman plans. Small wonder if a royal Ptolemy desired the Hebrew Bible in Greek: what rules ('Torah') *ought* Jews to obey? Meanwhile natives could bamboozle foreign judges.

Under Jewish self-government there had already been servient systems: the law applicable in and to the Temple enclave, diverging in places from the general

halakha; Noachide law applied by Jews to their resident aliens; and sectarian law (about which see below). Where a dominant legal system utilizes servient systems anomalies will arise. Natives entitled to litigate before their own courts may have recourse to the dominant system, especially if official judges are more easily bribed (Ex 23:8; Mishnah, *Peah* 8:9). Important criminal and fiscal cases would be heard by state tribunals. Greeks in Egypt would be sued only in Greek courts; their tenures were not subject to native law. A troublesome soldier billeted on natives would not appear before a native court: a petition to government was required. So a disappointed litigant in Judaea might challenge the elders' jurisdiction, allege that a possible breach of the peace loomed, and alert an appointed official. Then only pleas, evidence, and remedies the latter would recognize could operate, Jewish principles being disregarded. Hence private transactions could be framed and engrossed in Greek as well as Aramaic so that they might be valid internationally in either type of court. Some said the law of the land was the law.

Potential litigants claimed membership of a community and chose a court appropriate to the remedy sought or to the balance of power. However, if one went to a district governor over, say, a boundary, he would recommend a compromise, or refer the case to local arbitration, thus combining native justice, the best evidence, and an effective execution procedure. A servient system is hampered if the loser obtains an order to halt process: a suit in which more than one court has concurrent jurisdictions is a nightmare. On the other hand in Palestine as in Egypt litigation was a form of entertainment. If God was the true fountain of justice, did not the Israelite mind revel in juridical arguments which, by definition, were also religious? To carry one's complaint to any court rescued one from anonymity, and might enhance the influence of one's group or faction.

SUBSTANTIVE AND ADJECTIVAL LAWS

Laws are no better than their administration, which depends on the skill and honesty of judges and their decrees' being implemented. The mosaic of jurisdictions was indescribable. An international law of the sea was emerging while Rome mistakenly fancied she perceived a much wider 'law of nations', applicable to foreigners in Rome. Each Greek city had its own laws, procedures, and system of law revision. No doubt there was a *climate* of Greek law and jurisprudence; but citizens could normally sue only in their own city, where aliens must depend on patrons. There was no intercity reciprocity apart from treaties; even on one island (Crete) treaties were required to secure mutual recognition of public laws and select areas of private law (e.g. intermarriage). In Corinth Roman law applied to Roman citizens. City committees might handle local affairs: defence, markets, sewers, aqueducts, the mint, temples, and (one thinks of Tyre and Ephesus) the 'asylum'. Each city had elected its inferior magistracy. The poor were disregarded, and fared badly in litigation; mass protests produced reprisals.

Failure to digest laws left the public at the mercy of manipulators. When a temporarily independent Jerusalem sent a governor to an outlying province he appointed 70 local judges and kept capital cases in his and his assessors' hands (Josephus, *Life*, 79). The Sanhedrin, presided over by the High Priest or his deputy,

had some original criminal and civil jurisdiction and some revisional powers. It could formulate directions in Torah matters; but how all these powers were employed is uncertain. Its decrees had high persuasive value in Israelite communities, but they would not impress dissentients. Many held that the king (and therefore his agents?) could neither sue nor be sued in an Israelite court.

The Mishnah suggests the Sanhedrin observed regularity, members voting in a specific order, with a quorum ensuring verdicts by a clear majority. Did this obtain in our period? Some rules were applied that did not find a place in the Mishnah. No Jewish court could decide a matter outside the *halakha*, for example the impressment of labour or services. Judicial torture was unknown, unless Jewish rulers adopted Roman practices, torturing slaves and defaulters. Should one sue for slander in a Greek or a Jewish court? Where could insolvent debtors be condemned to be sold? Could Jewish courts administer a testator's estate, familiar as Jews were with gifts before death? The Torah was notoriously weak in dealing with theft and robbery. Pagan and Jewish laws were said to be simply incompatible.¹ Jews insisted on two competent witnesses for judicial proof, more interested, as they were, in the admissibility of testimony than its cogency. A Jewish court might quail at the amount of relevant law. If they placed custom first, customs differed from region to region, and towns' customs could differ from their hinterlands'. A principle of *halakha* could be included by reference in an imperial decree (e.g. freedom from process on the Sabbath); but Torah experts might differ as to its compass. The emperor could issue decrees regarding a crime (e.g. tomb-robbery). Above all laws and regulations stood unrepealed Seleucid and Ptolemaic statutes, especially concerning the economy.

Court-hearings were not adversarial; judges, both state appointees and 'elders', interrogated witnesses. Notabilities sometimes interceded for prisoners. A few of the latter conducted their own cases, appealing for mercy with abject confessions. Some Torah experts, unable to move any judge, would pray to God to help widows and orphans, his own protégés. Could justice come from such a medley? An Israelite must pursue justice (Dt 16:20), but the royal duty to administer it (cf. 2 Sam 8:15) was elusive. When Philip, tetrarch of Gaulanitis (d. AD 34), went on progress hearing cases he thereby proved local methods insufficient. Jewish fundamentalist zealots stood out against all rule save their own, claiming they alone could enforce the Torah. No problem lacked an answer if their biblical blueprint was inerrant and exhaustive. They could quote chapter and verse, while their pagan neighbours hardly knew their own laws.

JEWISH LAW

Under the Romans Jewish law (*halakha*) was not dominant but servient (following Alexander the Great's model), nevertheless only a few Israelite judgements, for example that X was 'worthy of death', required the ruler's endorsement. Israelites were an agricultural people and became adept at commerce. Fictions, needed in all legal systems, flourished among them. If at the approach of a Sabbatical Year people avoided lending for fear of not being repaid (Dt 15: 1–2, 7–10), means were invented whereby money could be recovered notwithstanding the Year. Accommodation loans and investments, hampered by the Torah's prohibition of 'increase' (usury), were

eased by ingenious expedients. A Ptolemy fixed legal interest at 25 per cent, but the *halakha* would have none of that. The 'stubborn and rebellious son' (Dt 21:18–21) escaped death by rabbis' construing the text shamelessly strictly; and when adulteries increased the archaic ordeal of the 'bitter waters' (Num 5:11–31) was declared obsolete.

Testaments and adoptions were unknown. *Halakha* does not allow a wife to divorce her husband, though it permits him to divorce her without restriction. Marriage under Greek-style contracts permitted her to free herself in stated circumstances, and eventually rabbis could force a husband to divorce her if he became insufferable.² So contracts could modify general rules. They did not bind without at least a token of present possession (cf. Lk 10:35). Bargains could be annulled for 'over-reaching'. Borrowers automatically insured the objects borrowed. Moveables could be acquired only by lifting or drawing, unless taken simultaneously with immovables. Land would be lost by three years' adverse possession; and chattels became ownerless if the owners 'gave up hope of recovery'. To become a partner each must become a servant of the other(s); and agents represented their principals without liability for fraud. Greeks would find such rules archaic.

Jews prized documents above witnesses, and a confession could settle a civil, though not a criminal action. Money cases were distinguished from capital cases, which required a fuller court: the standard of proof being lighter in the former class, where the decision depended, in some cases, on a party's oath. Seizure of debtors was facilitated by contracts allowing the lender to proceed 'as if by decree of the court'. The custom whereby A could vow to the Temple any benefit B might have had from A could defeat the spirit of biblical protection of parents.³ Rabbis offered to annul such a vow if A repented – but no one compelled him to repent. A proselyte from paganism entered Israel (by immersion, with circumcision if male) as if newly born, without property or relations.

Matrimonial law, too, was peculiar. Though marriages were usually 'arranged' with a dowry, intercourse alone could make a marriage; but *halakha* regarded marriage with a pagan as a concubinage. The levirate, known to 'primitive' peoples, was strange to Greeks and Romans. A wife's barrenness would excuse the surviving practice of polygamy (*sc.* Polygyny). A wife had an assured sum at her husband's death or divorce without fault on her part; but she was not his heir, and step-children might neglect her. Adultery was a crime, but not fornication. Inheritance was patrilineal and agnatic, males preferred to females. *Talio*, making punishment fit the crime, had divine approval; but a compensation procedure developed to meet claims more logically. There were five mandatory sentences according to the crime: flogging (the 39 lashes),⁴ stoning, burning (he who has intercourse with a woman and her daughter), beheading, and strangling. Anyone preparing to commit a very grave crime, for example buggery, could be killed by a passer-by. Extra-halakhic punishments included amputation of hands, casting over a precipice, and drowning. The executed criminal was exposed on a pole till sunset (Dt 21:22–3): the foreign penalty of hanging up alive (impalement/crucifixion) was recognized as compatible with the text, and suitable for blasphemers. A 'plotting' witness incurred the penalty he intended for his victim (Susannah 61–2). Witnesses were the executioners. 'Strange worship' was a capital crime, provided actual idolatry was proved. Bestiality

(known among pagans and readily imputed to them) was criminal, an 'abomination' like homosexuality, itself forbidden even to all the descendants of Noah.

Halakha was immune to amendment. No ruler could change it or dispense from observance of it. Contracts in favour of the Temple were exempt from some restrictions applicable in transactions between individuals. The High Priest was supreme judge there and priests might apply lynch-law to protect the place's holiness. A non-priest serving in the Temple was subject to a severe but unknown punishment (Mishnah, *Sanh.* 9:6), but it was a remote contingency. Priests were subject to extra restrictions in marriage. Rome allowed pagans to be warned off entering the inner enclosure; but until the High Priest ended the practice sacrifices were offered on behalf of the emperor. No Jewish king, or common priest, could interfere with the Temple, while the general *halakha* could be expounded to the public by priests and later by rabbis through interpretation. Useful principles guided those interpreters: no law must be imposed on people beyond their strength; the door of repentance must be left open; no untrained persons could attain halakhic soundness; nevertheless ordinary presumptions served God's purposes (e.g. when is a witness presumed to lie?); and reason supplied useful canons of textual interpretation (e.g. scripture does not contradict itself). In dire emergencies departure from the Torah was allowed to a Jewish court.

Experts, giving the Torah an imperative voice to those Israelites who were presumed to be observant, surely held a power all their own. Jurists in Rome related what reason had made of the Twelve Tables and old practices; in Greece laws new and old were collected in archives and sometimes carved in stone; but the *halakha* represented Jewish adepts' estimate for the time being of what God commanded Moses. One who doubted Moses risked being swallowed up by the earth,⁵ if he had not been coerced already!

RELIGION AND LAW

God selected, as his people, the descendants of Abraham through Isaac. At Mount Sinai they accepted the Covenant, to be binding on their issue for ever. If they obeyed him they would prosper in the Land, otherwise they would incur curses (Dt 28). The 'nations' rejected such an offer and served as instruments of his vengeance. If Jews were subject to them God's mercy had not prevailed over his justice. Secularly-minded Romans wondered at Jews' social exclusiveness, glorifying their Torah. If jurists settled an abstruse point of *halakha* or elders dealt with some farming practice, the court on earth knew its decree was binding in heaven, for the Torah was on earth, not in heaven. Yet the judges' scope was imperfect: what did 'cutting off from the people' mean (Lev 17: 10, 14)? Did such divine displeasure require excommunication, or the death penalty? The thought-world is illustrated by the following:

The False Prophet (Dt 18:20) prophesies what he has not heard or has not been told to him [by God] – his death is by the hands of man [strangulation]. But he that suppresses his prophecy, or disregards the words of another prophet, or transgresses his own words, his death is at the hands of heaven [mysteriously]. (Mishnah, *Sanh.* 11:5).

Gaps left by the *halakha* are noticed in heaven. One who repudiated his contract for want of present consideration would suffer in the World to Come (Bab. Talmud, Baba Mešî'a 49a; cf. Ps 73:11); and he who caused a conflagration by means of a deaf-mute or a minor was liable (only) in the Court of Heaven (Mishnah, *Baba Qamma* VI.4).

Since righteousness won blessings from the Lord (Ps 24:3–6), a greater scrupulosity was propitious. On the other hand for a scholar to retract was not shameful. One tried to 'do justice and righteousness' even when not obligated to do so (cf. Lk 16:5–8), and to keep to the *halakha* even when one's failure would pass undetected. Righteous kings were expected to free cities from taxation, redeem captives and free slaves and prisoners. Subjects aimed to do 'deeds of kindness', helping the 'poor and needy'. Since God redeemed the Israelites from Egypt they must be generous (Dt 15:1, 15; 24:17, 22). Very scrupulous people, unorganized yet identifiable, the *ḥasîdîm* (God's beloved), would, for example, bury objects endangering the unwary, and pay the heirs of deceased persons to whom they *might* have owed money.

Israelites valued some rules, for example the Temple's sanctity, so highly that they would give their lives to maintain them, though no court compelled them. The 'nations' could be incredulous.⁶ Meanwhile troublemakers would accuse even kings of unrighteous behaviour, and claim that the Torah required objectors to remedy matters. Herod the Great made short work of such protests, but Agrippa I, keen to appear observant, was more understanding. Religion can be a cloak for self-interest;⁷ but it could also be an immovable object in the way of Roman force. Whose master would win?

Some Sadducees, associated with the priesthood, construed the law strictly, while Pharisees ('Separatists') were more inventive and more scrupulous. Among these were groups of different levels of observance: Greeks thought they were schools of philosophy. None of these rules was false (who could prove it?); and Greeks understood them to be *nomoi*, 'laws'. A Pharisaic rule could be enforced if their faction was in power. Sadducees respected Pharisaic rules in the Temple to avoid popular demonstrations (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:372). Could a Pharisaic majority sway a judicial decision? Who could tell? Mere indifference towards an alleged rule of *halakha* would excuse no accused. On the other hand Jews could extract testimony from a reluctant witness by appealing to God's injunction to speak out (Lev 5:1).

A Galilean must be aware of five 'laws': the various forms of Israelite *halakha*; the *halakha* of the Samaritans, with their sanctuary on Mount Gerizim and their own priesthood; that of *ḥasîdîm*; the laws of Greek cities and cosmopolitan cities like Tiberias; and the Roman law with its ultimate sanctions, which did not always respect the privileges of Roman citizens. Did obedience to the Torah really exempt one from care about state law (so R. Nehunya, c.AD 70–130)? Could one even organize a discussion at an inn between individuals subject to those laws? At least three would not eat with each other nor with any of the remainder. If a Jew pontificated in the name of a 'strange god' he must be put to death, even if he had always conformed to the *halakha* himself, declaring 'unclean' or 'forbidden' what was indeed so (Dt 18:20; Mishnah, *Sanh.* 11:6).

THE INNOVATOR

A jurist might opt for greater severity, or he could change his mind. With law unpredictable and chaotic and administration arbitrary innovation could be welcomed; but originality was suspect. Jews were collective, hierarchical, and chauvinistic. A disloyal son was an abomination whatever his arguments. Israel was supple in her joints because she was firmly joined. Apostates could be ignored; 'false' prophets could not. Hebrew did not distinguish 'dependant' from 'slave': the independent person was unknown. Despair of improvement, granted the confidence of interpreters of scripture, appears from two current fantasies: an immortal Elijah who would eventually right secret wrongs; and one or more coming Messiah(s), who would implement justice as no other person could (cf. Jer 23:5).

A leader citing scripture could collect a mob and challenge Rome. A religious maniac (e.g. Jesus son of Ananias, AD 62) might be handed over by Jews to the Romans. A desert-dwelling ascetic, such as the Baptist, could form a school of righteousness from disciples who 'repented' (Mt 3:8, 11). If he actually censured a tetrarch's marital life he incurred martyrdom. Rome did not object to sects, only to threats to imperial rule; but Jerusalem was alert to preachers seducing people to 'strange worship' or disbelief in Moses as she understood him. A threat to the solidarity of Israel was criminal. But a powerful genius, despising the High Priest, might devise a *halakha*, with a new calendar, a new vision of Jerusalem and the Temple, a new edition of the Pentateuch, and, with supporters who condoned his 'overvalued idea', found a community with its constitution. So the Essenes, who had great patrons, came to cultivate holiness within the 'world', while a branch sought sanctuary in the Judaean desert. The documents found near Qumran, a library of a sect that perished about AD 71, show they once included married couples, and later adapted their constitution to a celibate, coenobitic establishment.

Their 'Temple Scroll' shows that the Pentateuch could be simplified. We have their disciplinary code and a penal law (another servient system); those that deserved death would be handed over to the Romans. Slandering the community, lying knowingly about money, insulting a member, falling asleep during a session of the Many, murmuring: all these were crimes even though not specified in the Pentateuch. A revised law of evidence was needed, and they insisted on the biblical duty to rebuke offenders (Lev 19:17). One could be excluded from sacred meals for various periods, locked up, and even expelled. One could not argue with the leaders' judgements.

The innovator might have stimulated, over time, a halakhic reform within Israel. But the Many inducted newcomers subject to severe tests of sincerity, shunning outsiders, not even asking after their welfare. Pious Israelites already shunned disreputable people, including Rome's fellow-travellers. The Qumran sectaries followed the pious in refusing anything tainted by 'wickedness'. Even gifts from strangers were rejected; so the Essenes operated a kind of community (at any rate a sharing) of untainted property without seeming to be a 'race' apart.

In spite of their hostility to Pharisees and Sadducees, Qumran sectaries found no new way of discovering *halakha*. They studied the same sources with similar methods (permitting quaint interpretations, e.g. Mic 7:2 at CD 16: 14–15), and obtained results distinct from Pharisees'. The 'replies' in 4QMMT prove that, anterior to the

Mishnah, many problems of those who 'separate themselves from the multitude' could be settled by experts' interpretation, the results packaged in a mini-code. These 'Deeds of the Law' (distinct from behaviour without Torah significance) are a conglomeration. They relate to the calendar, Temple offerings (those by pagans now forbidden), the Red Heifer (a rare ritual), sin offerings, ritual slaughter, illicit marriages, tithes, lepers and numerous topics that, whoredom apart, have nothing to do with what we call 'law'. Characteristically, dietary restrictions and sexual relations appeared to be kindred topics.

Such 'replies' would bind only those who asked for them. Another separation to practise holiness was attempted by the Therapeutae, another desert group, about whom little is known. A feature of such experiments in 'separation' was that though they withdrew from 'lax' Israelite life they would constitute no real threat to it.

THE TRIAL OF CHRIST

Christians believe that Christ must die to redeem many from their sins. He was the Righteous Sufferer of the Hebrew scriptures and the Suffering Servant depicted in Isaiah 53, which with Psalm 22 was among passages allowed to 'explain' the so-called trial(s) of Jesus and his crucifixion. This process, noticeable in Matthew and in John, can have distorted the story beyond hope of historical reconstruction. One must use the New Testament accounts, only slightly corroborated by Talmudic fragments showing that Jews later believed Israelites were justifiably responsible for Jesus' death.⁸ We may ask how did the High Priest and his colleagues reach the fatal decision; why did Jews demand that Jesus die by crucifixion; why did Pilate gratify them; and why did they desire his death in the first place?

The Sanhedrin had no ordinary right to inflict a death penalty, which Roman law would reserve to the prefect. In religious riots a lynch-mob might defy the restriction; but if Jesus had been regularly condemned on a court day the Sanhedrin would have the odium of destroying a reputed holy man and prophet. But at Passover the Torah prohibited preparations for an execution, and all judicial proceedings were suspended. One could, however, investigate Jesus, leaving any sequel to the one person uninhibited from taking action, though he was confined to Roman forms of coercion. Granted that Jesus posed a problem, a formal investigation was desired (not tied to Mishnaic trial rules), where testimony could be tendered ('He said he could destroy the Temple and rebuild it'), and tested – we are told it failed as self-contradictory.

Jesus then admitted (no doubt under some pressure) that he was the Messiah and gratuitously prophesied, as if he were God's confidant, the Son of Man's coming in the sight of his own inquisitors. This was taken as blasphemous (he did not challenge that ruling), and he was declared 'worthy of death'. No one could stone him because of the Feast.

Pilate, activating a recognized 'extraordinary' procedure, perceived the priests had grounds for invoking his aid, without presuming to act in revision of their sentence (they had passed none). He did not query whether they had acted within their jurisdiction. He was not negligent, for he was not bound to go behind their certificate that Jesus was 'worthy of death'. Whether Pilate went over the priests'

and elders' heads to appeal to the bystanders, offering them a chance to rescue Jesus, is doubtful but not unthinkable. Pilate had the shortest of exchanges with Jesus. Was he a king (*sc.* the king Messiah)? He got no more out of him. He then acted as governor, since for him to reject the application of the High Priest would mar his ongoing collaboration with him. It seemed to be a public order matter (so Lk 23:2, 13), and Jesus was crucified between brigands. Pilate knew that Judaism could have political implications, and here he is supporting the limited self-government of Israel in a matter of religion.

But whence came the *prima facie* case against Jesus, the most interesting of our enquiries? His violent demonstration within the Temple; his scepticism of authority-bearing characters of all types; his proclamation of the Kingdom of God as 'at hand' and his followers its only subjects – all showed him a potential rabble rouser. His reputation as a miraculous healer, a broker of divine patronage, intensified alarm. He was not condemned as a false prophet, a rebellious elder, a seducer to idolatry, or otherwise under the Pentateuch; but two intelligible allegations seem to have been relevant. Jesus led ('seduced') people out of the beaten path of their ancestors; and he claimed a nearer relationship with God than God's priestly agents and practitioners of piety (including the rare miracle worker) had ever claimed for themselves. This combination, repugnant to the Prophets,⁹ was ultimately fatal. Pilate, however reluctantly, acted as the priests' and elders' implement, as the emperor's interests and good sense required.

THE POPULACE AND IDEALS

The crowd, no negligible force, did not save Jesus and he did not rely on them to do so. Israelites traditionally expected the poor to be righteous, the rich wicked, and government a form of exploitation. Roman taxation capped it all. The mob reacted violently to disrespect for their faith: a collective thrives on common fears. Religious zeal, widely tolerated, fostered antagonism to non-Jews. No police force prevented aggressive or subversive activities. A prudent governor convened not the council only but also popular leaders.¹⁰ In the New Testament 'mob' signifies a potential support for Jesus. He might well have proved their hero – but there were contrary indications. His healings encouraged belief in him, while he aimed sarcasms against hoarders and other power-holders, sparing only those ready to 'repent'. Some of these disgorged ill-gotten gains. He encouraged women to think, not a pointless eccentricity. The story of the conspiracy against Jesus indeed shows the High Priest concerned that the crowd might prevent Jesus' arrest.

But how single-mindedly could the populace support him? Whichever interpretations of Torah gained currency depended ultimately on popular recognition. Pharisaic or other notions became authoritative as the public adopted them. Jesus' lack of influential disciples could not escape notice. A popular movement, antagonistic to the priests, could indeed have insisted on Jesus' innocence; but the High Priest must be supported in any confrontation with Rome – and a moment had arrived to be realistic. The evangelists have chosen to dramatize the crowd's unfortunate participation since, just as Israel had accepted the Covenant at Mount Sinai for their issue, so an agreement between High Priest and people could offer Jesus

as if he were a scapegoat on behalf of sinners. So he was sent away to death, while the heart-searchings that allowed this 'fulfilment' of scripture remain conjectural. Judas' role remains a puzzle.

For the governor to appeal to the people was not un-Roman. But if his powers owed nothing to bystanders, their reactions must throw light on the case. A significant proportion of the public had wanted God to reign at last in fact. Scripture had supported them. Justice and judgement would flourish and the disadvantaged would get their deserts; obnoxious foreign rule would be ousted; and for all this personal and public purity were indispensable. John the Baptist preached repentance and many had listened. True to God, crowds would respond to a conversionist movement within Israel. But what would it cost?

Jesus' message had been simple. The work of Sadducees and various schools of Pharisaism had been founded on presuppositions that tolerated or even fostered abuses. They concentrated pedantically on God's commandments (Mt 23:23), rather than on the disposition that he implicitly, or through Prophets explicitly, required. All could turn to God, ignoring expediency and mere opportunism. Personal piety would take biblical rules in its stride, a solution within the scope of the uneducated and those with little to lose. Could pagans accept such a doctrine? The populace would be indifferent to this, but Jesus' teaching incidentally threatened differentials. And there was more.

Who can forgive every debtor, turn the other cheek, love enemies, practise humility, and yet retain the protection of a respectable group? Jesus' answer raises doubts: one would have associates as unworldly as oneself (Mk 10:30). Love of God enables one to reach a high spiritual standard: but many wanted recognition here and now, for shame went with low status. To disregard differentials and legal distinctions fits an ascetic;¹¹ but even *ḥasīdīm* behaved as if they stood before the bar of heaven, not as if commandments were symbolic. Moreover if the Messiah comes, who can 'abide his coming' (cf. Mal 3:2)? Only those who have nothing to fear will await that Kingdom. Such reservations, impressive even to the simplest, will have served *a fortiori* to impel Jewish rulers to crush this movement.

CONCLUSION

In a society where democracy, and representative and responsible government are unknown 'justice' and 'judgement' must be chimerical. What legal criteria could usefully be invoked? What 'law' is 'right'? Rabbis say that all responsible legal opinions are 'words of the Living God', even if contradictory (Jerusalem Talmud, *Yebamot* I, 6 (3b)). What can that mean in practice? Who will settle one's case? The corruption of judges was proverbial (Babylonian Talmud, *Šabbat* 116b). Does one need an intercessor? Would self-help be cheaper and more effective? Israelites' doubts about Greek judgements are severe: even if they are factually unexceptionable they should be ignored.¹²

Jesus' own formula appears from Luke 12:13–21, where, as at Luke 18:2–6, a justiciable right is denied its remedy in practice. In the former passage Jesus neither recommends going before a judge (a deplorable experience: Mt 5:26) nor offers to act as arbitrator. Attention is distracted from a hypothetical right towards the

litigants' subjective condition. Once the parties begin to seek each other's welfare their problem melts. In marriage each spouse must keep the other from adultery; and when Caesar claims revenue, what matters is that one should not begrudge him what one really owes him.

Confusion of rights and duties could arise from studying both *halakha* and state laws without eliminating covetousness and pride. However, in the second passage one sees how the oppressed must not give up; they must not make a present to the wrongdoer and so subsidize vice. God, for his part, had cursed oppressors time out of mind through Moses and the Prophets (cf. Lk 16:31). One must concentrate on the moral state of the actor, rather than the book-norm or custom the judge must consult.

If this formula applies universally an Israelitish version of righteousness could at last commend Israel herself to a sceptical world. It would take advantage of Roman broadmindedness and Greek curiosity, proceeding as it does not as a moral philosophy but as a deduction from scripture. Individuals' responsibility is enhanced, and likewise their sense of self-worth, while halakhic texts remain to be construed as moral guidelines. This, then, is not a religious law, but a call for a subjective disposition. There is no code, memory is not burdened, scrupulosity is channelled, ethnic peculiarities become symbolical (Mt 12:7; 15:18–20), and one ends with a prescription for the soul's health. Yet where law is a lottery the legally minded still object that a list of duties is more manageable, and can be propounded with more confidence, than an amorphous change of heart. The populace of Jesus' day might well suspect, let Torah-specialists argue for ever, their own pedestrian aspirations were more sound. When non-Jews became Christians the result was a separate 'race' who were prepared to go back to Noah's progeny for their 'law'.

NOTES

- 1 Josephus, *Antiquities* 18:371.
- 2 Riskin 1989. For divorce in Qumran see G. Brin in Bernstein 1997: 231–44.
- 3 See Ex 20:12; 21:17; also Dt 27:16.
- 4 By a neat interpretation of Dt 25:2–3 Pharisees reduced the biblical 40 lashes to 39 (Mishnah, *Makk.* 3:10; 2 Cor 11:24).
- 5 Num 16:32; 26:10; Ps 106:17.
- 6 Josephus, *Against Apion* 1:208–12.
- 7 Josephus, *Jewish War* 2:517; *Antiquities* 18:319, 323; *Life* 65–7.
- 8 Babylonian Talmud, *Sanh.* 43a.
- 9 See Is 3:12; 14:14; 46:5; Ezek 13:8–16; 28:2–10; Am 2:4; 1 Kgs 14:16; 2 Kgs 21:9, 12–16; Mt 27:63–4; 24:3–5, 24; Jn 5:18; 7:12, 47; 10:36.
- 10 Josephus, *Life* 284, 301.
- 11 Derrett 1995.
- 12 Elon 1994, 1: 16–18 (the ban on forcing Jews before a non-Israelite court endured for long).

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CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

RELIGION IN PRE-EXILIC ISRAEL

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Translated by Hazel Harvey

The Hebrew Bible presents matters as if Moses revealed to Israel on Sinai its entire religion, fully developed (Exodus, Deuteronomy). But the Bible narrative then has to assume that a great part of the Torah of Moses was subsequently forgotten or ignored, in order to explain the very different reality of Israel's pre-exilic religion. According to 2 Kings 22f., the ancient religion of Moses was rediscovered only by King Josiah towards the end of the pre-exilic period (622 BC) and it was not until about 400 BC in the post-exilic period that Israel was pledged to the 'Law of the God of Heaven' by Ezra (Ezra 7-10).

Whereas earlier scholars have been content to accept (with certain modifications) the Bible's presentation of the situation, it is now often argued that the religion of Israel in the pre-exilic period was nothing but a variant of Canaanite polytheism; and it was not until the exile and the succeeding period that it developed into the exclusive monotheistic belief in Yahweh attributed to Moses. This view is based, first, on the recognition that almost all the documentation of the early days of Israel originated at a much later date. Also, the findings of modern archaeology have revealed that pre-exilic Israel had much closer cultural and religious ties to its Near Eastern neighbours than was previously realized.

But however much we are justified in assuming that Israel's religion, like any religion, had to grow and develop into its final form, the question remains of why it began to differentiate itself from the other religions of the Near East. I shall follow a middle way in attempting to reconstruct this process, starting from the belief that what arose in the early days of Moses was not the entire religion, but nevertheless surely some important impulses towards its further development.

ISRAEL'S RELIGION IN THE PERIOD BEFORE THE STATE

It is difficult to find any documentary evidence for the origins of Israel's religion, but there are three starting points that help us to construct a history.

The first is the flight from slavery in Egypt of a fairly large Semitic group, led by Moses, in the second half of the thirteenth century BC (Exodus). The god Yahweh had commanded Moses to organize this flight, and had also promised to provide a

new homeland for the refugees (Exod. 3f.). At this time Yahweh was a mountain god of the Midianites in the north Arabian desert, without a pantheon; his attributes were those of a weather god. Moses knew of him from his father-in-law (Exod. 2:15ff.; 18). The successful escape and the survival of the Red Sea crossing (Exod. 14f.) and the experience of theophany on Sinai (Exod. 19f.) helped to create a personal link between the god Yahweh and the group led by Moses. The special circumstances that gave rise to Israel's religion help to explain three of its characteristics that would later become important: (1) Yahweh's personal relationship to a whole group of people – cf. the epithets 'God of the Hebrews' (Exod. 5:3); 'God of Israel' (Judg. 5:3, 5). The gods of the Near East were usually attached to cities or regions and had no personal relationship except with kings and single individuals. (2) The extreme experience of escaping from an alien power influenced this personal relationship with God, giving it an inward solidarity and an outward exclusivity. Later, this would become a most prominent feature (cf. Deut.). (3) Having originated in a process of social revolution, the Yahweh religion continued to express frequent criticism of rulers and of society.

The second starting point is the Canaanite religion of the farmers and herdsmen of Palestine. When the culture of the late Bronze Age collapsed towards the end of the thirteenth century BC these people freed themselves from the Canaanite city-states and founded family communities in villages in the mountains. They united in a defensive league called 'Isra-el' (recorded on the stele of Merneptah, 1219 BC), placing themselves under the protection of the god El ('May El reign'), who had stood at the head of a Pantheon in Ugarit as 'king of the gods', but who now, in the altered social circumstances, had developed on the one hand into a Most High God (as El-Elyon Deut. 32:8) and on the other hand into a personal god (cf. personal names). El was venerated at various locations in the area (Beth-El Gen. 31:13, Shechem Gen. 33:20; El-Olam in Beersheba Gen. 21:33). Also the many place names formed from *Baal* indicate that this god was venerated in the area. When the group led by Moses came upon the tribes fighting for their freedom, it gave them the opportunity of combining with El their own god Yahweh (who had already proved his effectiveness in an act of liberation) and of making him the patron lord of the league. This transformed Yahweh into a regular war god (cf. Exod. 15:3; 1 Sam. 18:17; 25:28), with whose help charismatic leaders defended the freedom of the tribes against the attacks of their neighbours (Judg. 15:19f., 23; 7:18). As long as Yahweh occupied the position of ruler no permanent political power could develop within the group (Judg. 8:22f.). In this way Yahweh preserved the liberty and the relative equality of all the families of the tribal society which existed before the development of a state.

In this period the unique position of Yahweh gave rise to exclusivity only on a political level. As for religion, other gods and goddesses were venerated besides Yahweh/El, without giving rise to any conflicts (Judg. 6:25–32 refers to a later period). It was probably a remnant of Canaanite religiosity that caused Yahweh to be given the company of a goddess. The secondary veneration of 'his Asherah' at his side, which is attested from Kuntillet Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qô'm for the ninth and eighth centuries, probably harks back to the early syncretism of El/Yahweh, from which Yahweh inherited the consort of El. With an Assyrian overlay this became,

in the seventh to sixth centuries, veneration of the 'Queen of Heaven', probably an Ishtar figure (Jer. 44:15ff.).

The Bronze Age practice of erecting temples in cities was mostly discontinued by the Israelites. The only temple buildings used by them were the ones at Shiloh and Shechem. The typical holy place before the state was established was a 'Height', an open space set apart on a rise outside a settlement, such as has been excavated in Dothan ('Bull site'), in Arad and perhaps also in Dan. Next to the altar, Massebe and Asherah symbolized the divine presence, probably as a male-female duality. Typical celebrations at these simple, decentralized cult locations were agricultural festivals at the start of the harvesting of the barley fields (Mazzot), wheat fields (Shavu'ot) and orchards and vineyards (Sukkot, Judg. 21:19), with acts of thanksgiving for blessings received and prayers for fruitfulness to come. There was feasting and drinking and merrymaking (Hos. 4:11-14). It is still common to differentiate between the Yahweh religion and the 'Canaanite fertility religion', but it must be emphasized that the aspect of fertility was firmly integrated into the religion of Israel in the times before the state. That was not incompatible with the festival of Mazzot also being used for remembrance of the flight from Egypt (Exod. 23:15).

The third starting point is family religion, which forms a widespread substratum under the historical religions of the Near East. The Israelite families chose a god from their region as their personal family god (the father's god) and expected him to help, protect, support and bless their members. Beside him, they could also venerate a family goddess (Asherah, later 'Queen of Heaven'). Family gods of the early period included El, Baal, Shadday, Gad, Shalem, and so on, as can be seen from personal names that incorporate the name of a god. On the other hand, it was not until late in the time of the kings that the national god Yahweh also became the favourite family god. Whereas Israel's relationship with Yahweh had a historical basis, each individual based his or her trust in the personal family god on his creation at the time of birth (Ps. 22:10f.). House cults, in which the family god could be invoked, are attested by texts (Judg. 17f.) and by archaeological finds (e.g. at Megiddo). In addition to the veneration of the family god there was also a certain amount of ancestor-worship.

RELIGION IN THE EARLY MONARCHIC PERIOD

Saul and David established the monarchy; David and Solomon oversaw the development of Israel into a territorial state, ruled from the centre, with a surrounding ring of vassal states. This led to a thoroughgoing transformation of the Israelite religion. In the early monarchic period the need to legitimize the newly won political power, for which the Yahweh religion had no ready answers, forced the addition of major features borrowed from other religions. The court theologians of David and Solomon used Egyptian and Mesopotamian precedents to develop a new theology of kingship, according to which the king, as the incarnate son of Yahweh, was commissioned by him to bring the whole world to bow down to him (Ps. 2:7f.). At the same time the king claimed for himself, as the son of God, to be the channel of blessings, preserver of justice (Ps. 72) and high priest (Ps. 110:4).

Closely connected with this theology was the theology of the Temple at Jerusalem, which David and Solomon built as a splendid cult centre for their realm. Jerusalem was presented as the city of God, identical with the mountain of the gods in the north and therefore the centre of the world (Ps. 48:2f.). Yahweh was present there (Ps. 46:6); that is why the city could not be overrun by the threatening forces of chaos or men (Ps. 46:4f, 7). Rather, from Zion Yahweh would conquer every nation (46:10f.).

In the theology of Jerusalem, Yahweh himself became a king of gods with a royal consort; he became El-Elyon ('highest El') and Yahweh-Zebaoth ('Yahweh of the armies'). He was enthroned in and above the Holy of Holies in the Temple at Jerusalem, where cherubim guarded a gigantic throne made of olive-wood and covered with gold leaf. The small ark beneath was intended to maintain continuity with the old religion of Yahweh. But as God of the state of David and Solomon, Yahweh had grown far beyond the god of Israel and had become ruler of the universe, as befitted David's imperial policies. Within the state, David's young monarchy used Yahweh as guarantor of its permanence (2 Sam. 7).

It is peculiar to Israel that these 'normal' political and religious changes never found general acceptance. Among the disempowered tribal authorities there was widespread resistance throughout the kingdom to the autocratic regime and its annexation of Yahweh. The protest led to several uprisings against David and Solomon, during which the slogan 'Yahweh is king' (cf. 1 Sam. 8:7; 12:12) was used against the monarchy. When Solomon repeatedly compelled Israelites to labour on his ambitious building-works, Jeroboam led a rebellion (1 Kgs 11:26–8; 12), calling upon the god who had delivered them from slavery in Egypt (12:28). The golden images of calves (which Jeroboam dedicated to Yahweh after the uprising had proved successful) were originally intended only as receptacles for the invisible god, symbolizing his power.

In the rebellion, which led to the separation of the northern kingdom, the liberation ideals of the Yahweh religion, which predated the state, made further inroads against the monarchy. Jeroboam tried to find a form of government better suited to the religion; to this end he refrained from establishing a permanent residence, and decentralized the state cult, establishing it in Bethel and Dan. However, as the northern kingdom continued to lose stability, Omri provided a fixed residence for the northern kingdom in Samaria. Unfortunately there is no documentation for the theology of kingship in the north. But it does seem that the greater significance attached to the Exodus tradition in the north made the institution of the monarchy much less stable there (frequent usurpations 1 Kgs 15:27f.; 16:15–22; 2 Kgs 15:10, 14, 25, 30).

OPPOSITION FROM THE PROPHETS IN THE NINTH AND EIGHTH CENTURIES

From the ninth century the opposition to the monarchy shifted to prophetic groups. This began with the social encroachment (1 Kgs 21) and the religious politics of the Omrides, who provoked the protest by the prophets Elijah and Elisha. In the course of the politics of alliance Ahab had provided for his Phoenician wife

and her followers a temple in Samaria for Baal, god of Sidon. Ahab no doubt intended a subsidiary veneration of Baal next to Yahweh, the national god. However, this diplomatic syncretism aroused a bitter backlash from conservative prophetic circles. It began with a public contest about which god, Baal or Yahweh, could better bring rain (1 Kgs 18) and ended in 845 BC in a bloody revolution. A follower of Elisha anointed the officer Jehu as king. He put to death all the sons of Omri, together with the detested Jezebel, and destroyed the temple of Baal and all its worshippers (2 Kgs 9f.). It was in this confrontation that the Yahweh religion first displayed religious intolerance and cruelty in a political context.

The prophetic opposition became more radical in the eighth century, shortly before and during the period in which both northern and southern kingdoms came under pressure from the military expansion of the Assyrians towards the west. Now single prophets arose, proclaiming in the name of Yahweh the downfall of both Israel and Judah. Also Amos in the northern kingdom and Isaiah in the southern pitilessly exposed the deplorable social conditions. The expulsion of small landholders from their plots (Mic. 2:1–3), the cruel application of the laws of credit forcing them into debt-bondage (Amos 2:6), a legal system that gave lesser folk no recourse to the law (Is. 10: 1–4) – they attacked all this as sins against Yahweh. At the same time they condemned the life of luxury led by the upper classes (Amos 6: 1–6) and denied legitimacy to worship that was not matched by righteousness in daily life (Is. 1:10–1).

Isaiah in the south and Hosea in the north exposed the ruinous foreign policies by which each new ruler believed he could win benefits from holding the balance of power between his larger neighbours, Assyria and Egypt (Hos. 5:12–14). To put one's trust in an ally and his superior chariot capacity seemed to Isaiah to show a lack of trust in God and was therefore doomed to fail (Is. 7:9; 31:1–3).

Finally, in the north, Hosea condemned Israel's religious rites in the rural areas and in the capital city as neglect of Yahweh, being a regular 'cult of Baal'. The merrymaking on the heights sometimes degenerated into obscenity (Hos. 4:11–14) and no longer expressed the reverence that was due to Yahweh. Israel believed that it could ensure fertility and political stability by means of sacrifices, images of gods and many rituals, but meanwhile Yahweh was neglected, he who had lovingly bound himself to Israel in its early days, like a man to a woman (Hos. 2:4ff.) or parents to their child (11:1ff.). He had once delivered them from Egypt, he alone had cared for them in the desert and given them their fruitful land (Hos. 13:1–8). That is why Yahweh would take back from Israel all the cultivated fields (2:11–15) and send the people back to Egypt or Assyria (11:5, 11). Only when the process of delivery had been completely undone could the failed love story of Yahweh and his people make a fresh start in the waste places of exile (2:11–17).

The prophets of divine judgment in the eighth century, and then also those of the seventh and sixth centuries (Jeremiah, Ezekiel), found little acceptance during their lifetimes for their radical message. On the contrary, they were sent away (Amos 7:10–17), denounced as traitors (Is. 8:11–15), tortured (Jer. 20:1–6) and declared insane (Hos. 9:7). Nevertheless their significance for the history of Israel's religion can hardly be overestimated. The prophets of judgment made Israel aware, in a completely new way, of the strong emotionality and high ethical demands of its

god. Yahweh had bound himself closely in great love to this one people, Israel. But, for this very reason, he also made special demands on Israel, to be faithful to him, and to administer justice (Amos 3:1f.; Is. 5:1–7). If Israel did not fulfil these justified demands, but instead trod Yahweh's love underfoot, he was capable, as lord of the universe, of turning his might against his own people and sending Assyria to destroy them. In saying this, the prophets showed Israel for the first time a new possibility of defining itself primarily in religious terms, from its peculiar relationship to God.

THE REFORM MOVEMENTS OF THE EIGHTH AND SEVENTH CENTURIES

The collapse of the northern kingdom in 722 BC (when the Assyrians conquered Samaria) caused profound dislocation among the communities. The prophets Amos and Hosea had been right, although no one had believed them! The followers of Hosea, who came with the refugees from the north as far as Jerusalem, were particularly active in stirring up reform movements in the southern kingdom at the end of the eighth century under King Hezekiah, and at the end of the seventh century under King Josiah. The reformers were anxious to learn the causes of the catastrophe that had befallen the northern kingdom, in order to save Judah from a similar fate.

'Hezekiah's reform' was a reform of the cult and probably also a social reform. Hezekiah purged the Jerusalem cult of ambiguous symbols for God, removing Nehustan, a snake symbol, from the temple, although the tradition was said to go back to Moses; he also closed down sanctuaries on hill tops, where statues of Massebe and Asherah had allowed syncretistic abuses to arise (2 Kgs 18:4). Evidence of provincial sanctuaries being closed down in this period has also been found by archaeologists in Arad and Beersheba.

If we may associate this reform with the so-called 'Book of the Covenant' (Ex. 20:22–3, 19), then this is where we see for the first time an effort to forbid the use of images of God and the subsidiary veneration of other gods within the cult of Yahweh (Ex. 20:23; 22:19; 23:13). In order to avoid syncretism, Yahweh must be worshipped only at sites officially declared sacred to him (20:24). These measures were intended to remove from Judah the cultic abuses Hosea believed had brought God's judgment upon Israel.

At the same time there was an attempt to mitigate the social inequities Amos and others had denounced. Thus debt-bondage was limited to a maximum of six years (Ex. 21:2–6), the courts of justice were to stop favouring the wealthy (23:1–8) and it was forbidden to oppress the poor, strangers, widows and orphans, for Yahweh was a merciful god (ss:20–6). The sacred institutions of a weekly day of rest and a system of leaving fields fallow in turn provided a basis for the development of an early system of poor-relief (23:10–12).

The new aspect of this reform of the laws was that each new religious and social reform was announced in the name of Yahweh as being directly authorized by him, Yahweh came personally to Israel, bringing his commandments and laws, and expected them to reform their religion and society in the way he wished, as an integral part of their worship. In the rest of the Near East – and in Israel too in earlier

times – the gods were the guardians of the law only in a general sense, and it was the king who dispensed the law, usually without any religious aspect, or the law courts that passed judgment; but now things changed. The reform movement of the eighth century led Israel for the first time towards a directly theologized law and, as time went on, this became ever more central to its relationship with God.

Hezekiah's reform was probably not very successful, for the uprising he led against the Assyrians in 701 was a failure, and during the long reign of King Manasseh in the seventh century Judah continued to suffer massively under the political and cultural yoke of the Assyrians.

But scarcely had the Assyrian empire begun to weaken, from 640 on, than there came together in Judah a broad reform coalition composed of sections of the bureaucracy of Jerusalem (Shaphan) and the priesthood (Hilkiah) as well as the Judaeen rural nobility ('People of the Land') and also some prophets (Huldah, the young Jeremiah). They put Josiah on the throne, although he was only 8 years old, and were determined that the new chance of independence he represented should be used for a thoroughgoing reform of Judah. The so-called reform of Josiah that, after long preparations came into force in 622, was a national, religious and social reform. Its legislation probably forms the nucleus of the book of Deuteronomy (Deut. 12–26).

Josiah had perceived that the withdrawal of Assyrian power from Palestine had provided the great opportunity for the nation to re-establish the empire of David. He therefore marched into the territory of the former northern kingdom and destroyed the ancient sanctuary of Bethel (2 Kgs 23:15–18), in order to force his brothers in the north to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem, with no syncretistic additions. The young Jeremiah also preached to them, calling upon them to reject all syncretism and false alliance and to return to the religion and cult of Yahweh on Zion (Jer. 2:4–4:3; 31:2–6).

However, the main thing was the reform of the cult. In the light of their experience of political collapse and foreign domination (by the Assyrians) the reformers saw the need to follow the path preached by the prophets and to create a new identity for Israel based on its religion. That is why they made every effort to establish the exclusive worship of Yahweh (monolatry) in all sections of society. Their slogan was 'Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God; there is one God, Yahweh' (Shema Yisrael, Deut. 6:4).

This entailed, first, ridding the Temple at Jerusalem of all the subsidiary cults of other divinities (e.g. the cult of Asherah, 2 Kgs 23:6f.) and the influence of foreign religions, which had become established during the Assyrian occupation (worship of the constellations, horses for the sun god Shamash 23:4, 11).

Secondly, it meant centralization of the cult; in other words, in order to increase control and to strengthen the unity of the state, the legitimate cult of Yahweh was restricted to Jerusalem. All provincial shrines were obliterated (Deut. 12), the once so popular hill-shrines lost their symbols of God since Massebe and Asherah were banned (Deut. 16:21f.). This not only destroyed the basis of all local differentiation in Israel's religion (the Yahwehs of Bethlehem, Samaria or Hebron: poly-yahwism) but it also robbed the family cults of their independence; from now on, family sacrifices were allowed only during the pilgrimage festivals in Jerusalem, which the priests controlled. In order to stop uncontrolled private sacrifices, the reformers even sanctioned profane slaughter (Deut. 12:13ff.).

This leads on to the third aspect – the reformers' interest in integrating more decisively into the worship of Yahweh the Israelite family religion, which had been practised until then in a largely independent and unnoticed way within the Yahweh religion. During the long years of Assyrian occupation, family religion had provided an open door for foreign religious influences. People were fascinated by Babylonian rooftop rituals (Zeph. 1:5), they made use of foreign fortune-telling methods, baked crescent cakes for the 'Queen of Heaven' (Jer. 7:18), and enthusiastically embraced the cult of Moloch (Jer. 7:31; Ezek. 16:20f.) (in which children were most likely not sacrificed but merely underwent a ritual of dedication).

Jeremiah had already pointed out the inconsistency of calling upon Yahweh in times of national distress but turning to one's family god and goddess during everyday upsets (Jer. 2:27–8a; cf. 44:15ff.). If the reformers did not want to lose the half-won battle they needed to have greater control over family religion. They therefore banned all foreign auguries and conjuring rites (Deut. 18:10b–14) together with the related 'cult of the stars' (17:2–7) and the Moloch cult (18:10a). Nor, in their opinion, could the family god be any other than Yahweh; they therefore required every family member to forget bonds of blood or friendship and to report any worship of any other god in the household (Deut. 13:7–12). On the other hand, they seem to have regarded ancestor-worship as less harmful, forbidding only the use at the meal for the dead of food that had been dedicated as a tithe to Yahweh (26:14). However, necromancy (consulting the spirits of the dead) was strictly forbidden (18:11).

In order to integrate family religion and state religion it was decreed that when heads of families performed sacrifices they should include an acknowledgment of the history of Yahweh's relationship with the whole nation of Israel (Deut. 26:1–11) and tell it to their children (6:20–5). The reformers gave them a ready-made catechism in the form of the decalogue, combining the most important things demanded of every head of family (to worship no other god, to make no images) with remembrance of the fact that Yahweh had delivered every individual Israelite from slavery in Egypt and had become his or her personal God (Deut. 5:6–10). They were consciously welding together national and the individual destiny. On the other hand, when they called upon Israel to love Yahweh 'with all your heart' (Deut. 6:5) they were trying to imbue the personal relationship of God and his people with the warmth of a personal devotion.

Finally, 'Josiah's reform' was a far-reaching social reform. The legislator required an end to be put to the devastating effects of the harsh credit laws, by a remission of debts every seven years (Deut. 15:1–3, 7–11), and debt-slaves were to be given start-up capital on release (15:12–18). Poor-relief was greatly extended: the tithe was to be given every third year to the needy (14:28f.). Moreover, families were to invite the local poor to share their pilgrim feasts when they travelled to Jerusalem for the festivals of Pesach-Mazzot, Shavu'ot and Sukkot (16:1–17). The strict external exclusivity set up by the reformers in the field of religion was to be matched by an internal solidarity that would unite the whole nation under Yahweh.

In the course of their reform the Deuteronomic authors created for the first time a consistent theology for Israel. What is most noticeable about it is their emphasis (like Hosea's previously) on the religious traditions of the early days: the exodus,

Sinai and the occupation of the land, and the considerable reduction of the importance assigned to the state tradition: the theology of king and Temple. They did say that the Temple had been chosen by Yahweh, but he wanted only his name to reside there (Deut. 12:11). Likewise, while the king was chosen by God, he was forbidden to raise himself above his 'brothers'; the king was no longer the law-giver; indeed he himself became subject to the law (Deut. 17). Instead, the reformers had recourse to the authority of Moses, issuing their laws in his name. Because Josiah's reform regarded itself as a return to Israel's beginnings, the idea arose of a Book of Law proclaimed by Moses in early times, written down and then forgotten (2 Kgs 22:8ff.). The fact that not only Temple and kingship but now for the first time a book was given a central religious role in Israel's relationship with its God was to prove vital for the survival of Israel's religion.

It is very probable that the two central theological concepts of the Old Testament, 'chosen people' and 'covenant', derive from the Deuteronomic authors. According to them, Yahweh, universal creator of the world, lord of all things, had made Israel (alone of all the nations) his 'chosen people' by delivering them from Egypt (Deut. 7:6–8; 10:14f.), and not because of any special virtue among the Israelites but from his divine love. Thus Israel's peculiar relationship with God in early times and Yahweh's universality, which had come to be attributed to him in the time of the kings, were not incompatible. But Israel could not match the expectations of its God by accommodating itself among its neighbours. On the contrary, Israel's destiny was to cut itself off from all other nations. God's attention, and the requirement, which went along with being chosen, was summed up by the Deuteronomic theologians in the concept of 'covenant', which they borrowed from the political terminology of Assyrian vassalage treaties. Yahweh was said to have promised their forefathers that he would give Israel the fruitful land they now occupied (Deut. 7:8f.). Israel owed a debt of gratitude and was therefore required to keep Yahweh's laws and commandments (7:12ff). If Israel lived up to Yahweh's expectations it would dwell happily in the land with Yahweh's blessing, but if it ignored his laws and commandments it would be cursed by God and would lose the land (Deut. 28). From the viewpoint of Deuteronomy a formal covenant had been entered into between Yahweh and Israel in the early days, on Horeb (= Sinai, Deut. 5) and again after Moses' proclamation of the reformed laws shortly before the entry into the Promised Land (Deut. 29). These became the model for the new covenant between Josiah and the nation in which he solemnly pledged himself to carry out the legislation of Deuteronomy (2 Kgs 23:1–3).

There is no general agreement about whether it was actually possible to enforce this extreme reform in the way in which it was conceived. The reform legislation in Deuteronomy is partly utopian in character, and many scholars have doubted whether it could be put into practice. However, it is possible to start from the fact that at least parts of the Deuteronomic laws became state law in Judah in 622–609 BC. It is clear that the reform of the cult was carried through to a large extent; it is the social reform that can hardly have been achieved in every detail. However, the theology of Deuteronomy was of enormous importance in the years to come, and would form the essential basis for the theology of the time of exile.

THE RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTS AT THE END OF THE MONARCHICAL PERIOD

With the early death of Josiah in 609 BC, when he fell in Megiddo fighting against Pharaoh Necho, Judah became once more a vassal state, first of the Egyptian empire and then from 603 of the new Babylonian empire. This brought the reform to a standstill. We can see from Jeremiah's criticism of society that there was another serious social crisis in Judah (Jer. 5:26–8; 6:6f.); the protective dams set up in the cause of religiously motivated internal solidarity were too weak to restrain the force of the economic interests of the upper classes. In the arguments about the validity of the social aspects of Josiah's reform the coalition of its supporters fell apart: the priesthood of Jerusalem had seen their interests fulfilled with the centralization and purification of the cult. They believed that Judah would survive because the Temple at Jerusalem had been purified (Jer. 7:4). The officials around the Saphan family, who had been the chief supporters of the reform, went over to the opposition during the reign of King Jehoiakim (cf. Jer. 36) and were no longer in a position to supervise enactment of the legislation for social reform. And Jeremiah himself became disillusioned and left the reform campaign. In his view Yahweh's law had been betrayed by the upper classes (Jer. 5:4f.) and falsified by the scribes (8:8). Instead, he now foretold, in the name of Yahweh, destruction for this society so riddled with violence, injustice, hypocrisy and falsehood (9:1–10); Yahweh himself would destroy his own Temple, which they had turned into a robbers' cave (7:1–15).

After Jehoiakim's vacillating policy of contracting alliances had led to Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem in 597, and the first Judean deportation, which sent into exile, among others, the young King Jehoiachin and the prophet Ezekiel, the political and religious elite split into two parties, which clashed violently with each other. On the one side stood the 'Nationalists' led by the Hilkiah family (who provided the high priest for the Temple in Jerusalem). They believed that an alliance with Egypt would enable them to shake off the Babylonian yoke; they argued against Jeremiah's message and, with the support of such prophets of salvation as Hananiah, disseminated comprehensive religious propaganda, saying that those in exile would soon return home (Jer. 28:2–4), and that Yahweh – as in the theology of Zion – would always prevent any capture of Jerusalem.

Opposed to this party stood the officials who had been supervising reform under the leadership of the Shaphan family. They were pro-Babylon and supported Jeremiah, who was counselling submission to Babylonian rule in order to survive (Jer. 27). His letter to those in exile, advising them to settle and even to pray for their enemies, called forth an angry protest from the Nationalist (Jer. 29). Close to this party was the priest–prophet Ezekiel, who, among the exiled, argued against the Nationalists' hopes of salvation (Ezek. 17). He proclaimed that Yahweh's glory had left the Temple, which meant that Jerusalem was doomed to destruction (Ezek. 7–11).

When the Nationalists succeeded in winning over the vacillating vassal-king Zedekiah and persuaded him to begin a risky policy of rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar was provoked into further reprisals. This time he did not temper justice with mercy; Jerusalem was put to the torch in 587. The Temple, which provided the theological

basis for resistance to Babylon, was laid waste, and Zedekiah and the leaders of the Nationalists were severely punished (2 Kgs 56:6f., 18–21). Now the state of Judah had also fallen, as predicted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and by Isaiah and Micah before them.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

RELIGION IN ISRAEL DURING AND AFTER THE EXILE



Rainer Albertz

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Whereas earlier research into the history of Israel's religion concentrated on the pre-exilic epoch, it has recently become increasingly clear that the formative period of the Israelite-Jewish religion was the time of exile and the years immediately following.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EXILE FOR THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL'S RELIGION

For the further history of Israel's religion the significance of the fall of the state of Judah in 598–587 BC and the resulting deportation can hardly be overestimated. The northern kingdom had already collapsed, and now with this new political catastrophe it seemed that Yahweh had finally cancelled all His historical promises of salvation. Was Yahweh inferior to Marduk, the god of the victorious new Babylonian empire? With the exile, Israel's religion fell into its worst every crisis; nevertheless, it was in the exile that the foundation for its comprehensive renewal was laid. However, not all the constituent parts of Israel's religion were affected by the crisis to the same extent.

The destruction of the sanctuary at Jerusalem and the fall of David's monarchy shattered the old-style theology of Temple and kingship, with its unconditional guarantee of salvation. This greatly damaged the theological basis of the 'Nationalistic' party.

However, what remained unaffected was the Deuteronomic reform theology that (shortly before the exile) had already been emphasizing the pre-state tradition of salvation rather than the state traditions. It is true that the loss of the land made some of the population question the Deuteronomic concept of having been given the land after the exodus, but this could be explained theologically by linking God's promises to the obedience to His laws that was required in return. Thus the theology of Deuteronomy was able to provide the decisive basis for various groups (which we group together under the term 'Deuteronomists') to overcome the crisis of exile.

The exile confirmed the message of the radical prophets who had preached divine judgment. They had foretold the catastrophe as Yahweh's judgment on His unfaithful people. Most of the inhabitants of Judah had previously rejected their message, but

it now provided an important key for interpreting the political catastrophe as Yahweh's punishment, and accepting it in that sense. In this way the theology of the prophets, which had previously been the voice of the opposition, became during the exile the decisive basis for the general religion of Yahweh.

The exile had not completely extinguished the piety of Israelite families. During all the difficulties that many of them had to bear, their piety remained firmly based on God's activity as Creator, which would be unaffected by any historical catastrophe. And the survivors soon experienced for themselves Yahweh's protection and blessing, albeit in exile. Thus family religion became in the exile an essential basis for Israel's general religion.

Thus the crisis brought about by the exile led to a far-reaching shift within Israel's religion. With the destruction of the Temple and the end of the monarchy the religious traditions lost most of their connections with institutions. Instead, informal groups of theologians grew up around leading families, prophets and priests, or else around their writings, and there was a great increase in literary activity. Thus, in the time of exile, there was an astonishing blossoming of theology, although this carried with it the danger of losing touch with reality, and introducing divisions in the religion of Yahweh.

HOW THE THEOLOGIANS OVERCAME THE CATASTROPHE OF THE EXILE

For those living at the time of the political catastrophe of 587 BC its significance was by no means as clear as it is for us today. For the 'Nationalists', who had continued until the last minute to hope that Yahweh would intervene to save Zion, it was a crushing blow that destroyed the entire structure of their belief. But the 'Reformers' also had to face difficult questions: how could the catastrophe have happened despite Josiah's reform? Indeed, might the reform itself even possibly have caused the catastrophe, by establishing monolatry, which may have angered the gods who were rejected, causing them to withdraw their protection from the people of Judah? In any case, women who had fled to Egypt early in the time of exile reproached Jeremiah, saying that the disaster befell them and their families only when they ceased venerating the Queen of Heaven (Jer. 44:15–19). Thus it entailed a great effort, among both those left at home and those in exile, to come to terms with the catastrophe and to establish the correct theological interpretation of it.

One area where this was achieved was in exilic liturgies. The major cult of the time of exile consisted mainly of liturgies of lament, which were not linked to any holy site. In remembrance of the fall of the state of Judah, four great holy fasts were celebrated every year (Zech. 7:2ff; 8:18f.) either in the ruins of the Temple of Jerusalem (Jer. 41:5) or in exile in Babylon facing in the direction of Jerusalem (1 Kgs 8:46–51). It can be seen from the so-called Lamentations (Lam. 1–5) and the psalms of national lament (Pss 44; 60; 74; 89; Is. 63:7–64, 11) that it was usual in these services to recognize (under the cover of the Babylonian aggressor) Yahweh himself as the author of the catastrophe (Lam. 2:1–10; 4:11–16) and to acknowledge the people's own guilt, be it the failed policy of vacillating between the great powers (4:17) or the false guarantee of salvation preached by the Temple prophets

and priests (2:14; 4:13), and to beg Yahweh, despite his apparent ineffectiveness, to pour down forgiveness and restitution on them and retribution on their enemies.

It is probable that these services included readings from those prophets who had proclaimed God's judgment, and that special collections of their utterances were made for this very purpose (Jer. 8:4–10, 25*) or even composed especially (Amos 4:6–13). Their provocative and hurtful words, which had once been heard only on the streets, now received, for the first time, the respect accorded to the Word of God by the entire congregation. The purpose of these readings was to bring the survivors to a recognition of the prophets' message, which they had previously largely rejected. Hearing once more the accusations of the prophets they were intended to realize what had caused the catastrophe, and hearing the prophets' proclamation of judgment they were intended to understand that the catastrophe was God's righteous judgment, which they could have avoided if they had paid attention the first time they heard it.

In addition to the incorporation of the prophetic messages into the cult, there was during the time of exile a widespread concern outside the cult with the legacy of the prophets of judgment, which can be seen in the production or the revision of many of the books of the prophets. Of these, the Deuteronomistic book of Jeremiah (Jer. 1–45* = Jer. D) is particularly interesting.

The term 'Deuteronomistic' is used to designate the groups that modelled their theological thinking and literary style on Deuteronomy, and developed it further. The anonymous Deuteronomistic editors of Jeremiah D probably included the descendants of the reform party, which had been led by the Shaphan family. Their efforts were directed at taking the message of the prophet who had been close to their parents and grandparents and bringing it to the people of Judah who had stayed at home; it was proclaimed in the modernized form in order to avoid further disasters and to provide a direction for a new beginning. Their book of Jeremiah, which they rewrote in about 550 BC, is the literary distillation of a long period of missionary work, trying to educate the populace, during which they preached publicly about Jeremiah's message (Jer. 7:1–8, 3) and involved their contemporaries in discussions (9:11–15). They regarded themselves as direct descendants of Jeremiah.

The means used to integrate Jeremiah and the other prophets of judgment into the Deuteronomistic theology was the concept of a unified Word of God. This concept had appeared during the making of the Covenant in Egypt, in the proclamation of the Decalogue and the Deuteronomic Law (Jer. 11:3f. 6f.; 34:13f.). On the other hand, the Word had also been proclaimed by the prophets sent continually by God ever since Israel had been unfaithful at the very time of their rescue from Egypt, prophets sent to call the Israelites to convert and to follow the Law (26:3f.; 34:12ff.) With that, Jeremiah became a preacher of the Law in the tradition of Moses (cf. Jer. 1:7b, 9, 17 and Deut. 18:18b). It was only when they wanted to silence him that the covenant became invalid (Jer. 11:10) and Yahweh was forced to send down upon his people the disaster that had already been announced in Deut. 28.

In the view of his Deuteronomistic interpreters, Jeremiah's main demand was obedience to the first and second commandments. They believed that the worship of alien gods and veneration of images had been the main causes of the catastrophe

(Jer. 5:19; 9:13). That is why they saw it as their task to clear away the syncretism that had regained its hold (8:2f.; 19:12f.) in order to avert the continuing effects of God's judgment. But the Deuteronomistic editors of Jeremiah also emphasized Jeremiah's social criticism and made a connection with the Deuteronomic social commandments (Jer. 34; cf. Deut. 15). They believed that a new start was possible only if the people of Judah made far-reaching changes in religious and social areas (Jer. 7:3, 5ff.). Like Jeremiah, they argued against putting one's trust in the Temple (7:4), and expecting its reconstruction to bring security and well-being to the land. Nor did they put their hope in the last king, Jehoiachin, who had been deported to Babylon. He and his family were rejected and should never reign again in Judah (22:24–30). That is, instead of a restoration of state and cult imposed from above on the model of Josiah's reform, the descendants of the reformers led by the Shephan family canvassed for a broad renewal of the whole populace, a renewal that should surge up from beneath. They preached that in fact it would be Yahweh himself who would bring the new age of salvation when, after three generations (27:7) or 70 years (29:10) the universal rule (27:5f.) of his 'servant' Nebuchadnezzar would be over. Then Yahweh would make a new covenant with his people, which would be kept by everybody of their own free will and would therefore last for ever (31:31–4).

In an attempt to overcome the catastrophe of the exile, there was, first, the effort described above to make the populace accept the judgment prophecies and realize their contemporary validity, and to use them to interpret past events and to provide guidance for the future. What was also needed was a new interpretation of Israel's history, the history that had led to the catastrophe. This challenge was taken up by another party of Deuteronomists, who were at work most probably in Babylon, possibly in the circle around the exiled families of Jehoiachin and Hilkiyah, who had once been figureheads of the 'Nationalistic' party. They were at work soon after 560 BC, using older traditions to create the Deuteronomistic historical account (Dtr. H), which, after a recapitulation of the events of the exodus and on Sinai, begins with Moses' proclamation of the Deuteronomic Law, narrates the seizure of land by Joshua, the wars waged by the Judges and the establishment of the monarchy, and ends with the downfall of both kingdoms (Deut. 1–2 Kgs 25*). In exactly the same way as their colleagues who were revising the book of Jeremiah they believed that the main reason for Israel's collapse was its failure to observe the first and second commandments; the northern kingdom when it erected images of calves at Bethel (1 Kgs 14:4–18; 2 Kgs 17:7ff.), the southern kingdom when alien gods were venerated by King Manasseh (2 Kgs 21).

The downfall was brought about not by Yahweh but by Israel itself, who was continually unfaithful to him despite all his warnings. To this extent their work was a huge act of penitence, composed in exile. Nevertheless, in contrast to Jeremiah the historians were careful not to let the entire history of Israel amount to the relentless decline of Israel. They believed that there had also been periods in Israel's history when their religion had been godly and uncontaminated by syncretism. The first such period was the time of arrival, when Yahweh gave Israel (through Moses) the gift of salvation, which is the Ten Commandments, and gave Israel (through Joshua) the gift of salvation, which was the Promised Land (Deut. 5 to Josh. 23).

All this fitted in exactly with the Deuteronomistic theology. But it also went beyond it: the Deuteronomists also regarded the early monarchic period as a time of grace, during which Yahweh had granted Israel David's kingship and the Temple at Jerusalem. (1 Sam. 7:3–1; Kgs 9:9). It was not until the ageing Solomon began to venerate alien gods that David's empire began to crumble and fall (1 Kgs 11f.). But the Deuteronomistic theologians pointed out that history showed again and again that it was God's promises linked to the Temple and to David's line (1 Kgs 2:4; 8:16, 25; 9:5; 11:12f, 32, 36; 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19; 19:34) that safeguarded the survival of the southern kingdom for a long period from great catastrophes. It is true that they regarded God's promises as conditional upon the obedience of his people – to this extent they had learned from the prophets' criticism – but they refused to abandon the theology of king and Temple in which their 'Nationalistic' predecessors had put their trust. Despite the fall of the state they believed that the state tradition of salvation was still meaningful.

The Deuteronomistic historians presented Josiah's Reform as the splendid zenith of the history of the southern kingdom (2 Kgs 22f.) while reducing it to nothing but a reform of the cult, making no mention of the social reforms, and they thereby made the purified Temple at Jerusalem the decisive option for the future. They believed that the only reason why the cultic reform had not prevented the catastrophe was the abominable syncretism of King Manasseh, who had provoked Yahweh to an irrevocable abandonment of Jerusalem (23:26f.). Basically, Josiah had shown that the right path was the exclusive veneration of Yahweh. When the Deuteronomistic historians ended their historical account (25:27–30) with a note about Jehoiachin's rehabilitation by a Babylonian king, Evil-Marduk (662 BC), they were indicating that they still put their hopes in the descendants of David. While the Deuteronomistic revisers of the book of Jeremiah were calling for a comprehensive grassroots renewal, the Deuteronomistic authors of the historical account regarded the need for a royal cultic reform imposed from above as the lesson to be learned from the catastrophes.

The crisis of the exile was overcome by the messages of the prophets, by the Deuteronomistic theologians and also by the continuing piety of families. Josiah's Reform had incorporated their beliefs more firmly into the official Yahweh religion, and now family religion provided its basis and representative functions.

Since the downfall of the state, the family was the only element of the social structure that remained more or less intact. It is therefore hardly surprising that in the time of exile hope for the defeated nation depended on individual religious experiences and beliefs within families. If, despite the catastrophe, Yahweh had rescued certain individuals, then the community did not need to abandon trust in his saving power (Lam. 3). The personal avowal of belief that God had created every individual (Ps. 22:10f.) was increasingly applied to Israel as a whole (Is. 64:7) in order to pass beyond Yahweh's historical promises, which were open to question, and to find an indisputable basis for belief in the Creator. The Deutero-Isaiah group would also adopt this approach in order to provide credibility for its unbelievable message of salvation (Is. 43:1; 44:2, 21, 24.). Also, the descendants of those families who had been part of a small nation but had survived in exile and even become a great nation (Is. 51:1f.) were presented as the recipients of unconditional promises from God and

as a precedent for the move back into Palestine (Gen. 11:27–12:3), in order to strengthen the will of the exiled to survive and to return. Finally, ancient family customs, such as circumcision, which had probably been an apotropaic rite of manhood until then (Ex. 4:25; Gen. 34), and certain rituals to do with diet and the preparation of food (Deut. 14:3–21; Lev. 11) now, during the exile in Babylon, took on the function of indicating membership of Israel and the Yahweh religion (Gen. 17:10f.). In addition, the festival of the Sabbath, which before the exile had been a Temple festival on the day of the full moon (cf. Lam. 2:6), was reshaped into a family festival (Deut. 5:12–15) during which the head of each family could publicly express his loyalty to Yahweh (in the face of the pressure to conform to surrounding custom) by honouring Yahweh, not with a sacrifice, but by a day of rest and therefore loss of income. Also Pesach became once more a family festival in the time of exile (Ex. 12:1–14). Thus the family by celebrating the Sabbath and Pesach, commemorating the deliverance from Egypt, turned into an important carrier for the entire religion of Yahweh. The situation of being in exile among strangers gave it the function of preserving the unity of the nation through rituals that defined it.

THE START OF A NEW BEGINNING, LATER IN THE TIME OF EXILE

Options for a possible new beginning had been considered during the efforts to come to terms with the past, but the impulse to make a new start came during the exile, from the prophets of salvation.

With the fall of Judah in 587–586 BC the unconditional and all-embracing prophecies of judgment had come to an end. After the catastrophe what was heard instead – hesitantly at first – was a mostly anonymous message of salvation, heard most clearly in Deutero-Isaiah (Is. 40–55) and in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek. 33–48).

‘Deutero-Isaiah’ was probably composed by a group of former cultic prophets and temple singers who had gathered in Babylon around the writings of the prophet Isaiah. Impressed by the spectacular conquest by young Cyrus of the Medes in 550 BC, and of Asia Minor in 546, the group came to the electrifying perception that none other than Yahweh had aroused the Persian king (Is. 41:2ff.), in order to deliver his people from captivity in Babylon (43:14f.) The time of judgment Isaiah had announced (Is. 6) was finally over, Jerusalem’s guilt was absolved, Yahweh would bring in a new age of salvation (40:1–8).

The group of prophets took their message to the resigned people in exile and found disbelief and scepticism. The very suggestion that Yahweh would call an alien ruler to be his ‘anointed’ was contrary to all their religious traditions. This forced the group to find arguments to defend their incredible message. While doing this they arrived at insights that not only went far beyond the earlier national religion but also developed completely new dimensions for the concept of Yahweh’s nature: Yahweh was not only Creator of the world and Lord of history, as had been sung in the hymns in the Temple at Jerusalem (as the group of prophets remembered (40:12–31) but he was altogether the only effective god. Only he could announce future happenings that came to pass, and had already done this in earlier times (Is. 41:22f, 26f.; 46:9f.). The way in which Yahweh had planned events in history

would now not only be seen in his announcement that Cyrus would conquer Babylon but had been seen long before in Israel's history, not least in the prophecy of judgment that had indeed come to pass. But that meant that in the very moment of his apparent defeat, the fall of Jerusalem, Yahweh was in fact demonstrating that he was in control. The group described in terms of a fictitious court of law in heaven how all the other gods melted away in the face of Yahweh's monopoly of power over history (41:1-5, 21-9; 43:8-13). They predicted the fall of the two Babylonian gods who seemed so powerful, Marduk and Nebo (46:1f.). But, by doing this, for the first time in the history of Israel's religion they arrived at the idea of absolute monotheism.

This belief that there was only one god was closely bound up with making the Yahweh religion available to the whole world. If Yahweh as the only god could commission an alien king to upset the balance of political power in the Near East, his works of salvation could not longer be limited exclusively to Israel. Thus when Babylon fell the 'Survivors of the Nations' were invited to let themselves be rescued by Yahweh and to turn to him (Is. 45:20-5). In proclaiming this the prophets did not relinquish Israel's peculiar relationship with God, but clearly entered a new stage when the Yahweh religion was no longer merely the national religion: in the eyes of this group of prophets Israel now had the function of being a witness to Yahweh in the forum of the nations (43:10-12; 44:8; 55:4). Members of other nations were given the opportunity to join Israel's religion (44:5; 55:5). But this laid the foundation for the later Jewish mission.

The elevation of Yahweh to the one true God did not, in the opinion of the group of prophets, entail Israel having any particular political powers or status. The amalgamation of God's power and political power, which had been built up by monarchic theology, was now dissolved. Israel's foreign policy was no longer to rule the world. Israel was now 'Yahweh's servant', commissioned to bring righteousness to the nations (Is. 42:1-4), and to bring them Yahweh's salvation as 'a light for the nations' (49:6). And when the group of prophets described how the kings and the nations would be amazed to recognize that this humiliated 'servant of Yahweh' would carry their sins, then they went as far as to give a universal scapegoat function to Israel's humiliation in exile (52:13-53:12). Within the state, the group expected that Yahweh would lead the exiled people home and then he himself would take over the role of king in Zion (52:7-10). That sounded utopian, but in real terms it excluded the possibility of an earthly monarch for Israel; instead, the everlasting Covenant with the line of David was transferred to Israel as a whole (55:1-5). By establishing his own kingdom on earth, Yahweh prevented any mortal attempt at seizing power, be it by Babylon (47) or by the kings of Israel.

While the Deutero-Isaiah group recruited adherents from the non-priestly personnel of the Temple of Jerusalem, the members of the group that formed around the priest-prophet Ezekiel in Babylon were of priestly origin; from 573 until about 520 BC they were at work, following his insights, but also went beyond his thinking in a broad vision that developed their concept of rebuilding the Temple once more (Ezek. 40-8).

The main interest of these reforming priests was to defend their own independence by every means, an independence they had acquired when the Temple and the monarchy collapsed. Before the exile, the Temple had been accommodated in

the same building as the royal palace. They planned a new Temple that would be completely separate from the king, architecturally and institutionally. The glory of Yahweh that would inhabit the new Temple was not to be contaminated by amalgamation with political power (Ezek. 43:1–12). That is why the Temple was to have massive walls and gates, so that entry could be controlled by the priests alone. Before the exile, the king had been in control (44:4ff.). In the future only the priests would be allowed to enter the inner court and to serve at the altar. At the same time they removed from the king his ancient privilege (as son of God) of functioning as highest priest. He would be allowed only a place of honour in the outer court as foremost of the lay people, and from there he would be able to watch from afar as his sacrifice was offered (46:2–8).

The theological lever the reforming priests used to attack, for the first time, the concept universal in the East, that the monarchy was sacred, was the priestly distinction between sacred and profane, that is, the differentiation of areas of varying degrees of sacredness. This argument would only guarantee to the priests their cultic freedom at the price of demanding greater degrees of holiness for their own group, and a complete separation from non-priestly life. However, in order to provide the cult's necessary interaction between lay and priest, they would introduce a grade of lower priesthood, the 'Levites'. The Zadokite priests of Jerusalem understood by 'Levites' the priests of all other sanctuaries, because they belied that they bore the responsibility for the worship of idols in pre-exilic times and their descendants must accept being downgraded (44:9–14). This division into priests and Levites, later backdated to early times, was to cause considerable conflict when the exile was over (Num. 16:8ff.).

Finally, the reforming priests also used their scheme of separate areas to achieve their aim of creating a new political arrangement of society as a whole (45:1–89; 47:13–48:29): the capital city was to be separate from the Temple and was to be ruled no longer by the king's officials but by representatives of the tribes. They and the priests were to be given estates so that they could maintain themselves and would not need to raise taxes. Only the cultic gifts to the Temple should continue; this would represent a great reduction compared to the previous tithe (45:13–15). Each tribe was to be given an equal allotment of land so that all might live undisturbed at the same level of prosperity. But the king would receive land apart from the land of the tribes. And when the king made gifts of land to members of his family or his servants he would be required to do it from his share (46:16–18); this meant that the populace would be permanently protected from the monarchy's insatiable demand for land. Thus in the reform scheme made by the school of Ezekiel it was clear that the intention was to use the new beginning after the exile to correct the failed social developments of the monarchic period and to hark back in an almost utopian way to the times before the state.

THE FAILURE TO ACHIEVE A RESTORATION AFTER THE EXILE

Compared with the high expectations of the prophets of salvation, the real opportunities opened up for the Jews by Cyrus' conquest of the new Babylonian empire in 539 BC were disappointing. It is true that Cyrus probably gave permission for

the Temple at Jerusalem to be rebuilt, and retrieved gold and silver vessels that the Babylonians had taken from the Temple (Ezra 5:13ff.). But the rebuilding did not get under way, not least because of warnings voiced by the supporters of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy among those who had remained. Moreover, the prospect of living in Palestine under Persian rule instead of under Babylonian rule seemed so unattractive to those settled in exile in Babylon that there were no significant returns under Cyrus and Cambyses.

But when Darius usurped the Persian throne in 522 BC he faced uprisings in every part of his empire, which forced him to make greater concessions to the Jews in order to win their loyalty. He appointed Zerubbabel, grandson of Jehoiachin, as regent of Judah (Ezra 6:7; Hag. 1:1), commissioned him and Joshua, grandson of the last high priest of Jerusalem, to lead a large group of willing returnees back to their former homeland (Ezra 2) and apparently offered the prospect of a generous partial autonomy of the province of Judah under Davidic leadership. When this group returned to Judah from exile they rebuilt the Temple as the start of the new beginning, in complete accordance with the plan for the state cult outlined by the Deuteronomistic history in 520 BC.

In view of the desolate economic situation, Zerubbabel needed the support of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to mobilize the population (Ezra 5:1f.). They invested the rebuilding of the Temple with high hopes of salvation: Haggai expected it to bring about not only the start of a new age of blessings (Hag. 1:2–11; 2:15–19) but also an imminent shake-up of the world of nations, which would cause the wealth of the nations to flow into the new Temple (2:6–9). Zechariah predicted a great upheaval in world politics in 517 BC, which Yahweh would bring about to Jerusalem's advantage, using his heavenly messengers (Zech. 1:8–15; 6:1–8), and saw in a vision how the horns of the nations would be thrown down (2:1–4). At the same time, both prophets invested Zerubbabel of David's line with bright hopes for the nation. Haggai expressly lifted the curse that Jeremiah and his Deuteronomistic followers had laid upon the family of Jehoiachin (Jer. 22:24–30) and transferred to him for the time after the upheaval Yahweh's mandate to rule (Hag. 2:20–3). Zechariah took into account the aspirations of the priests to be independent and even prepared a coronation of Zerubbabel and Joshua (Zech. 6:9–14), who as Yahweh's 'anointed sons' were to exercise his universal hegemony (Zech. 4:1–6, 10–14). In this undertaking he was even supported by 'Nationalist' circles among the exiles in Babylon who sent gifts of silver and gold.

But these avid hopes, which dreamt of the restoration of an independent Davidic empire and even more beside, were not fulfilled. Even as late as 519 BC Darius was well able to put down the last rebellion in the Persian empire. He sat firmly in the saddle. The developments in Judah must have seemed to him like early signs of further rebellion. There are indications that the Persians intervened over the head of their satrap Tattenai (Ezra 5:3–17): it is true that the rebuilding of the Temple was permitted, but Zerubbabel vanished; Haggai and Zechariah were silenced. At any rate, they were not present when the Temple was dedicated in 515 BC. Thus the attempt by leading promoters of return (such as the families of David and Hilkiah) to restore both the monarchy and the state cult, with Persian permission, came to nothing because of the impatience of the nationalistic utopians.

What happened next can be explained only by the fact that among those who had stayed and those who had returned there were groups who wanted no such restoration, and they had their way. Among the former we should name the descendants of the reformers around the Shaphan family, who are known to have refused a return to Davidic rule; among the latter were the reformer priests who followed Ezekiel and strove for independence from the monarchy.

The form of social organization they introduced in Persian times was modelled rather on the pre-state situation. Under the supervision of the Persian satrap and his administrators two independent councils directed Judah's fortunes: the Elders and the College of Priests. They were assisted by an assembly of the people. All the councils were organized strictly according to family groups, and anyone wanting to participate had to be enrolled in the lists (Neh. 7:5ff.). The two main councils enjoyed a wide autonomy in the areas of religion, culture and local politics. The cult and the Temple were run and controlled by the priests, under the high priest, although the Persian king gave donations to the Temple and expected prayers of intercession in return (Ezra 6:8–10; 7:21–3). This situation, Jewish self-rule under the Persian umbrella, provided the leading families, both lay and priestly, with a greater share in decision-making than their own kings had ever allowed them. This may be one reason why later attempts to restore the monarchy were also blocked (Neh. 6:6–14) and why the Persians are the only world power never criticized in the Bible (apart from much later apocalyptic).

However, the loyalty shown to the Persians, which the majority favoured and found fruitful, had a high price to pay: the people were subjected to rigid Persian tax policies, which brought renewed misery to a section of the population.

The fiasco of the prophecies of salvation by Haggai and Zechariah had far-reaching consequences for post-exilic prophecy. Whereas the prophecies during the time of exile had generally been acknowledged and had been particularly effective and stimulating while the Temple was being rebuilt, they now fell into discredit again among most of the population. The writings of Haggai and Zechariah had to suffer modifications and revision (cf. the Deuteronomistic changes in Zech. 1:1–6; 7:4–14; 8:14–17, 19b). Groups who, despite all their disappointment when the time of blessings failed to appear, continued to mass around the prophetic traditions, for example the Trito-Isaiah circle around the Deutero-Isaiah prophecy (Is. 60–2), were marginalized by the pro-Persian majority in society (66:5). It was in this situation that post-exilic prophecy lost its relevance to concrete politics and concentrated instead on a distant change of fortunes that would overturn the entire present miserable reality (e.g. Is. 65:17–25).

CREATING A RELIGIOUS IDENTITY UNDER THE PERSIANS: THE SECOND TEMPLE AND THE CANONIZATION OF THE TORAH

The hesitant and fragmented resettlements from Babylon had already shown that Israel could no longer be expected to return to being one nation united in one land. Since the diaspora would continue, there was a need to provide a clear identity for the Jewish groups dispersed in scattered locations within the Persian empire. Because

there was no unified state this identity would have to be expressed in religious or cult terms. The way that was chosen was the one already indicated by the Deuteronomic reformers: a sense of unity could be based on respect for one Temple and one holy book to which all Jews were subject.

The second Temple, completed in 515 BC, was not only the centrepiece for the small local Jewish community but became the unifying reference point for many sections of the Jews of the diaspora who were obedient to the Deuteronomistic centralization of the cult and refrained from erecting their own altars. As far as we know, it was only the Jewish military colony in Egypt that failed to support this consensus; before 525 BC it had already built itself a Temple on the island of Elephantine in the Nile (see Elephantine Papyri 30, 12). Even though the Jews of the diaspora seldom had the opportunity to undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the Temple there remained for them a place of religious nostalgia; they undertook a kind of 'spiritual pilgrimage' that consisted of reciting psalms (cf. Pss 42–83). This development is directly connected with the end of the state cult. The Temple, controlled by the reformer priests, no longer belonged to the king but to the whole nation. Everybody had to contribute to the upkeep of the fabric and of the cult. Everybody had to pay the priests for sacrifices, pay the tithe for the Levites and also pay a Temple tax (Ex. 30:11–16). In the course of the post-exilic period the amount of taxes rose to about a third of income; this meant that the Temple became the most important economic factor for the Jewish community.

Even if the structure of the second Temple was basically similar to the first, it was very different in the cult it housed and in what it symbolized. The sublimated theology of holiness developed by the reformer priests meant that the Holiest of Holies remained empty; at the most a golden mark set into the pavement could symbolize the divine presence. And as befitted its claim to supreme holiness, the cult began to emphasize its function of atonement. In order to cleanse the sanctuary of pollution, and the whole population of their sins, an annual festival was introduced in the form of a Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). A popular image was adopted: the sins of Israel were transferred to a scapegoat and eliminated by chasing it into the wilderness (vv. 7–9, 20–22, 26). According to the theological thinking of the reform priests, purification and atonement were effected by the high priest sprinkling some drops of blood in the direction of the place that marked the presence of Yahweh in the Holy of Holies. In the same way, the newly created institutions of sin-offering and guilt-offering would repeatedly achieve atonement for individuals and for the whole community (Lev. 4; 5:14ff.) so that a catastrophe such as that of 587 BC might never happen again.

But precisely because their own troubled history had taught them the extent to which Israel's fate depended on the behaviour of all, the Temple alone was seen not to be enough, despite its function as a unifying religious bond and a centre for atonement. Those responsible for Israel's future had to take steps to regulate the thoughts and actions of all members of the nation, wherever they lived, in order to protect Israel from further judgment by Yahweh.

The means to achieve this was provided by the Persians' readiness, not only to respect the local laws of the nations under their yoke, but even to help publish them and to underwrite their local application with the authority of the Persian state itself

(cf. Ezra 7:25f.). The two governing councils of the Jews, the Elders and the College of Priests, were thus given the opportunity to create a document containing all the binding obligations and laws of Israel's religion, in order to obtain the Persian government's authorization of them for all the Jews in the empire. This is the background for the literary process of the creation and canonization of the Torah, which began during the fifth century BC and was probably completed towards the end of that century with the book of Ezra (Ezra 7).

When politics provided this opportunity to regulate the religion, the situation forced the two leading councils, lay and priestly, to come to a compromise. As a result, the Pentateuch they commissioned shows signs of compromise, because it had to respect the attitudes and interests of both the lay people and the priest-theologians. Recent research allows us to distinguish a pre-priestly contribution that follows Deuteronomistic theology (KD) from a somewhat later priestly one (KP).

The most important decision made by the lay theologians was to create a foundation history of Israel's beginnings, using older traditions, beginning with the patriarchs (Gen. 12), reaching a high point in Exodus (Exod. 1-15) and the gift of the Commandments on Sinai (Ex. 19ff.) and ending with the delivery of the Mosaic Law shortly before the conquest of the Promised Land (Deut.). In this way Deuteronomy but not the extra material Deuteronomistic History (the conquest of the Promised Land and the time of kings) was incorporated into the foundation history. This meant that Israel's religion was presented according to the tradition of the Jeremiah Deuteronomists, that is, it omitted most of the theology of king and Temple. Also, the fulfilment of the claim to the whole of Palestine was postponed to an indefinite future date, probably out of regard for Persian interests.

By including tales of the patriarchs, who wandered between Mesopotamia, Egypt and Palestine, the lay theologians created for the Jews of the diaspora their own place and identity, but at the same time insisted that they should regard Palestine as the homeland assigned to them by God (Gen. 12, 15). Placed centrally in their work was the covenant made between Yahweh and Israel on Sinai, which delivered God's guidance to his people in the form of the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant and the Deuteronomic Law. As the elders understood it, Israelites would serve God through the conduct of their daily life. This was exactly how the prophets and the Deuteronomic reformers thought things should be.

Here, in the heart of Israel's religion, the lay theologians attempted to correct the insidious clericalization. They believed that the fact that Yahweh had made a covenant and called Israel his 'Chosen People' had made it not only (as the Deuteronomic reformers had believed) the 'holy nation' (Exod. 19:6; cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:21; 26:19), which should remain separate from all other nations, but had given it the distinction of becoming a 'kingdom of priests' (Ex. 19:6). The view of the lay theologians was that this made the whole of Israel into a competent priesthood. The sacrifice made at the time of the Covenant was carried out by both Moses and laypeople (24:5f.). It was only after the worship of the golden calf (Ex. 32), which symbolically prefigured Israel's fall and Yahweh's judgment, that (the lay theologians believed) it became necessary to have recourse to cult personnel and cult objects (Ex. 32:26-9; 33:7-11). But, they said, Israel owed its survival of God's judgment not to the cult

but only to God's faithful adherence to his promises (Ex. 32:13; 33:1) and his generosity, which tempered his anger and caused him to renew his covenant (Ex. 34).

Since the time of exile prophecies had been accepted, but were not without risk. The theologians of the Council of Elders gave them due respect in their account of the foundation; for example, they designated Moses as a prophet (Ex. 3f.; Deut. 34:10), but far greater emphasis was laid on his supreme authority in revealing God's will and establishing the Law (Num. 12:6-8). Those who were directly descended from Moses and could lead Israel as he intended were not the prophets but the Seventy Elders (Num. 11:11ff.). By saying this, the lay theologians provided, for the post-exilic Council of Elders, for whom they were working, an explicit legitimization, in the foundation history.

Naturally, the College of Priests could not accept such an effacement of the cult. Their theologians therefore built up the theophany of Sinai (Ex. 24:15b-18) into a comprehensive foundation for the cult. In their presentation, Yahweh had given precise instructions (Ex. 25-31) for the whole people, led by Moses, to construct a portable sanctuary even in the wilderness (35-9), the equivalent of the Temple at Jerusalem. Yahweh himself in all his glory had dedicated the sanctuary (Ex. 40) and legitimized the first rites (Lev. 9). They also portrayed the rituals of sacrifice and the investiture of priests as regulated by God down to the smallest detail (Lev. 1-7, 8). And when the priest-theologians placed their version of the construction of the sanctuary (Ex. 25, 31:35-40) each side of the report of the lapse from faith and the renewal of the Covenant (32-4) they were underlining that it was the cult that had overcome the crisis of the lapse, and would help to prevent its recurrence.

It is true that the form of sanctuary and divine service that the reform priests invented was free from any reminders or symbols of the royal state cult. The newly created office of high priest, for example, was intended to take over the role of the king in the cult in the long run (Ex. 28f.). In this matter they were in full agreement with their lay colleagues. On the other hand they completely rejected the claim of laymen and Levites to priestly dignity; they believed that only the acts of atonement by Aaron and his sons, that is, the Zadokite priests, could avert Yahweh's anger from his people (Num. 16-18).

The priest-theologians went beyond the particularistic conception of the lay theologians when they inserted a creation history before the history of Israel's foundation (Gen. 1-11). By doing this they set the story of Yahweh's special relationship with Israel into the larger perspective of the history of the world and of humanity. This allowed a place for the universalizing tendencies that had become attached to Israel during the time of exile: Yahweh was no longer merely the God of Israel — he was Creator of humankind and of the whole world (Gen. 1), he had made a covenant not only with Abraham (17) but also with Noah and the whole of creation, a covenant that guaranteed the continuation of the world after the catastrophe of the flood (9). But it was only to Israel that Yahweh had revealed himself by name (Ex. 6:2), in order to build a direct relationship with Israel that would be expressed in its worship (Gen. 17:7; Ex. 6:3, 7; 25:8), the relationship that had been broken when creation went astray before the flood. This meant that Israel had a positive function for the world and could work together with other nations and other religions. Thus the priest-theologians contributed significantly to the success of the

initiative to draw up, with the approval of the Persian authorities, a religious and legal code for all the Jews of the empire.

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS SCHISMS UNDER THE PERSIANS

The efforts to standardize the religion could not prevent another social crisis in the Jewish community, in the fifth century BC. The catalyst was the harsh Persian tax system, which continually forced smallholders into bankruptcy, while the money-lenders, members of the Jewish upper class, profited from pawnbroking and debt-slavery (Neh. 5:1–5).

This new crisis resembled the one in the pre-exilic period. But this time it was more disturbing because members of the Jewish aristocracy were gathering taxes for a foreign power. Also, because in the interim an ethos of mutual help had been written definitively into the Torah, this cold and calculating concentration on money making was regarded as contrary to the spirit of the Yahweh religion.

For this reason the social crisis of the fifth century caused the upper class to split into two camps: on the one side were those members who were intent on winning economic advantage regardless of the religious obligation to help one another; their opponents called them 'sinners' and 'godless' and implied that their behaviour had cast them outside Israel's relationship with God. On the other side were the members of the upper class who were willing to embrace the social obligations of the Torah and to alleviate the distress of the bankrupt by making donations from their own wealth. They referred to themselves as the 'pious' or the 'righteous'.

The party that advocated mutual help carried on a hard-hitting theological debate with their opponents, which has left its imprint on many sections of the post-exilic literature, in Proverbs, Psalms and in the books of the Prophets. In the many proverbs referring to sinners and righteous people, for example, the aim is to give a strong message to the young that the actions of an apparently thriving sinner will nevertheless bring him to a bad end (Prov. 10:11, 16, 22). Didactic psalms sung in the Temple openly attacked the seductive position of the sinners (Pss 37, 49, 52, 62, 73, 94, 112). When the sinners went so far as to make wealth into their god (Pss 49:7; 52:9) and to exploit the weak (94:5f.) then – in the strong terms employed by their opponents – they were virtually denying the God of Israel and leaving the ranks of the people of God (Ps. 94:5, 14f.). The members of their own group were warned that they should put their trust in God and not in extorted wealth (Ps. 62:9, 11). It was thus that in the post-exilic period the monotheistic argument was first used against the practice of making a god of riches (Job 31:24–8), and religion, not ethnicity, became the criterion for belonging to the nation of Israel.

At the same time the pious section of the upper class developed a comprehensive system of pastoral care within their own group (Job 4:3–5). They had to contend with the tempting economic success enjoyed by the 'sinners' (Ps. 73:2ff.). Also, as shown by the book of Job, they had to deal with the more worrying problem that members of their own group, however pious and tireless in helping the poor (cf. Job 29, 31), could themselves fall from grace. This social crisis under the Persians let loose in Israel's religion the vexed question of theodicy (Job 9:21–4).

A second theological disagreement caused rifts between the impoverished lower classes and the two factions of the upper class. Socially marginalized, the poor joined the outsiders who kept alive the legacy of the prophets and sought salvation in social revolution, which they believed Yahweh himself would bring about. There are, at least, texts in post-exilic prophecy that allow us to surmise that there were sects within the lower classes who were inspired by the prophets (Malachi; Is. 29:17–24; 56:9 – 57:21).

Also, the poor regarded themselves as the righteous, because they put their trust only in Yahweh to rescue them from their misery. They hoped that he would make haste to strike down their oppressors, so that they, 'the most wretched of people', would break out in joy and jubilation (Is. 29:19f.). Then even the 'blind' and the 'sullen' who now mocked the prophetic expectations, would perceive their truth (vv. 18–24). This probably referred to the supporters among the pious section of the upper class, who helped the poor with alms but feared that a social revolution would threaten their own interests. The poor foresaw a limited place for them in God's future nature; the sinners, they believed, would be cast out.

THE THEOLOGIZATION AND SPLITTING OF PERSONAL PIETY

The depth of the split, both social and religious, in the Jewish community, can be seen from the fact that it even reached the level of personal piety. The Deuteronomic reformers had already assimilated the religion of the family to the official Yahweh religion; during the exile it had taken over vital representative religious functions. In the post-exilic period, because of the smallness of the Jewish communities in Palestine and in the diaspora, there was even closer assimilation of these two levels of Israel's religion.

On the one hand, in private prayer, some included intercessions for the nation and for Zion (Pss 3:9; 25:22; 28:8f.) and referred to the history of the nation (22:5f.) or the promises relating to Zion (102:13–22). On the other hand the community increasingly linked their prayers of lamentation and praise to the religious experiences of individuals (cf. Pss 90, 123, 125, 126, 128; 8, 103, 107, 124), since there was little evidence now of any political intervention in history by Yahweh. In this context, personal piety was reflected in the theology; their direct relationship of trust in God – in contrast to the alternatives practised by the 'sinners' – was problematized and made the subject of a conscious decision (Pss 118:8f.; 115:9–11; 125:1). The distance between God and man increased; out of the recognition of sinfulness, which Israel as a whole had had to embrace since the exile, even individual piety had to admit a deep consciousness of sin (Pss 32:2–6; 51:9–11; 130:4).

In the course of this theologization, with the pressure caused by the fifth-century social crisis, personal piety developed in two different ways, according to class: there was the personal theology of the pious upper class, and the 'piety of the poor', the personal piety of the oppressed underclass.

The members of the pious upper class wished to impose a personal piety on all, a complete and totally ethical piety. This would not only satisfy the increased ethical demands of the Yahweh religion but would also ward off the danger of clashes

between piety and the rational practices of the blatant 'sinners'. If every individual could simply claim protection from his Creator, without having to moderate his behaviour, then the grace of God could be misused all too easily to cover unrighteous deeds. In order to exclude this possibility, the pious wealthy declared that 'fear of God' and 'a complete change in behaviour' were signs of a genuine personal relationship with God (Job 4:6). It was only those who tried to change their lives to ones pleasing to God (in which not the least important element was compassion and practical help for the poor [29:12–17; 31:13–27]) who could safely hope for God's support and reward (29:18–20).

The book of Job is evidence of how this ambitious personal theology of the upper class was subjected to severe testing under the pressure of the social crisis. In the face of the depressing reality that their great piety often failed to bring them any reward – indeed that several of them, despite their selfless support of the poor, were themselves in danger of losing their position in society (cf. Job 30:1ff.) – many pious rich men asked themselves the hard question of whether their piety was any use (Mal. 3:14f.; Ps. 73:13). The composer of the moral tale of the rich and pious Job (Job 1:1–2, 13; 42:7–17) countered this question with another: should not true piety (which aspires to being more than a good bargain) be prepared to renounce all reward (1:9)? The writer, describing how Job withstood God's terrible testing, to the extent that even in deepest distress he was able to praise God (1:21f.; 2:10), is arguing for a new ideal of an independent piety, which went far beyond the piety of Israel's usual family religion.

On the other hand, the author of the dialogue (Job 3:1–42:6) found it more realistic to have Job screaming in his anger and disappointment. This moral drama puts the theology of wisdom in the mouth of Job's friends: sorrow is God's way of teaching you, it should be accepted humbly (5:17; 22:22); loud lament was a foolish thing (5:2–5), God would listen only to humble prayer (5:8; 22:21; 35:10); finally, man is born a sinner and so can never lay claims against God (4:17–21; 15:14). It is true that the writer of the book of Job described how this ambitious personal theology crumbled in the face of Job's real suffering. But he was by no means prepared to let Job win the argument with his wild laments, in which he even cursed God as a selfwilled tyrant and sinner (9:11–24). When he showed how Job was harshly put in his place by God (38ff.) when he made the mistake of challenging him to a legal battle (31:35–7), he was making it clear to his upper-class colleagues that their demand for a fair return for their service would put God's universal jurisdiction out of joint (40:8–14). He shows Job, confronted with the power of the Creator and Lord of History, regretting his wild laments by the end (42:1–6).

Even the author of the book of Job could not supply the members of the pious upper class with an answer to the question of theodicy, which had become an urgent one. Himself a member of the upper class, he could not share the hopes nurtured in prophetic circles that God would bring about a fairer society. But he did indicate that it was possible that after Job's death he would become reconciled with God and his merits would be recognized (Job 14:13–17; 16:18–22; 19:23–7a). This was a new idea inasmuch as the older Israelites had believed that a person's relationship with God ended at death. In the theology of wisdom in late Persian times, under pressure to cling to the idea of God's justice in the face of massive social injustices, the

possibility was raised that the relationship of trust with one's personal God must survive death, in order for the pious sufferer to be rewarded. This was the beginning of the latter hope of a personal resurrection (Is. 25:8; 26:19; Dan. 12:2).

In the piety of the poor the question of God's fairness was also fiercely debated. But in contrast to their rich patrons in the upper class the bankrupt smallholders could not point to good deeds of their own; they concentrated on the unrighteousness of the sinners, which was not merely an abstract matter for them since it affected their own survival. Thus in their prayers they could do nothing but commend their own poverty and misery to God, hoping to move him to mercy (Pss 10:12; 69:30; 70:6; 109:22). Powerless themselves, they put their hopes for vengeance in appeals to Yahweh, asking him to display his great power as Judge and King of the world (Pss 7:8f.; 10:16; 75:3) to set up a great court of judgment (9:20; 12:6; 14:5), to destroy the powerful sinners and their foreign allies, so that the oppressed might be set free and might once again rejoice before God (9:6, 18; 109:6–20). In this the poor were harking back to elements of the old Temple theology, but converting them now to a call for social revolution.

There are indications that the poor gathered in small religious groups and held services in their homes or in synagogues. In doing this they associated themselves with old practices of the family cult, such as the ceremony of individual lament or a ritual of thanksgiving (Pss 6f., 22). Here they were fighting back against the oppression of their small community and showing that God had not forgotten or abandoned them (22:25). A particular way to ensure salvation was to proclaim a slogan for their group, or a curse upon their enemies (Pss 12:6; 14:5f.; 75:3–9; 82:1–7). While the lower-class participants in such rituals looked for future salvation, they were drawing strength from religion that preserved the self-respect of the socially disadvantaged. And while the poor regarded themselves as the pious ones (Pss 12:2; 14:5; 69:29) they were using religious means to defend themselves against social marginalization.

THE SAMARITANS BREAK AWAY FROM THE CULT

To this social conflict was added in the fifth century a political battle, which – if we may believe Josephus (*Ant.* XI:302–47) – led at the end of the Persian period to a split within the cult and the erection of a Yahweh sanctuary on Mount Gerizim at Shechem.

Since the conquest of the northern kingdom in 722 BC there had again and again been worshippers of Yahweh in mid- and northern Palestine who oriented themselves in worship either towards Bethel (2 Kgs 17:28) or towards Jerusalem (Jer. 41:5). It even seems that the sanctuary at Bethel, unaffected by having been shut down by Josiah, came back into use after the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem, and in the time of exile was used by the Judaeans who stayed at home; this can be the only explanation for the harsh polemics of the Deuteronomistic History, composed in exile, which said that Bethel was a syncretistic mongrel cult cobbled together from the Yahweh religion and the religions of other nations brought in as settlers by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:24–34a).

When the Temple at Jerusalem had been rebuilt after the exile, those faithful to Yahweh in the north were invited (2 Kgs 17:34b–40) and participated in its cult. That was not a problem as long as Judaea was still part of the Persian province of Samaria. It was only when the south began to strive for political independence that the leaders of the Samaritans began to resist and to use every possible means to prevent the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem (Ezra 4:6, 7–22; Neh. 4–6). When Judaea gained political independence, at the latest after Nehemiah around 450 BC, the province of Samaria no longer had a Yahweh sanctuary, and its worshippers of Yahweh, who by then included even the family of the satrap Sanballat, threatened to lose all influence on the Temple at Jerusalem. The tribal-ethnic organization of the Jewish community, which admitted as members only those who could prove descent from Judah or Benjamin (Neh. 7:5ff.), meant that nobody could gain admission to their self-rule councils except by marrying in. The family of Sanballat attempted this several times, marrying into the family of the high priest (Neh. 13:28; *Ant.* XI.209f.). Also a majority of the priests apparently pleaded for the incorporation of their religious brothers from Samaria, who had long forsworn all syncretism and recognized the obligations of the Torah. But this attempt was blocked for political reasons by Nehemiah or perhaps by the Council of Elders, who suspected a danger of political infiltration; the sons of the high priest who had married Samaritan women were both expelled (Neh. 13:28; *Ant.* XI:306–8).

After it had proved impossible to open up the Jewish cult community to all Israel, Sanballat III conceived the plan of providing his expelled sons with their own sanctuary on the territory of his province. This did not contravene the Deuteronomic law of centralization (Deut. 12). He could argue that in the Torah the name of the sanctuary Yahweh would choose was not named. But if Jerusalem was not mentioned in the foundation document of Israel's religion, whereas the old sanctuaries of the northern kingdom such as Bethel, Shechem and Mount Gerizim were mentioned (Gen. 28:10–22; 33:18ff.; Deut. 27:11f.), then the Samaritans could justifiably claim that they were supported by holy tradition, if they wanted their own cult centre in Shechem and on Mount Gerizim. The Persian authorities seem to have hesitated for a long time before they allowed such an interpretation, since they were interested in maintaining good relations with the people of Jerusalem. But when Darius III was unexpectedly killed at Issus in 333 BC, Alexander gave Sanballat permission to build the temple on Mount Gerizim, in recognition of his military support.

When the Samaritans gained independence for their cult it by no means represented a religious schism. Both in Jerusalem and on Mount Gerizim the rites were performed by Zadokite priests. Both communities regarded the same Torah as the basis of their religion and of daily life. It was only much later, in the course of the expansion of the new state of Judaea after John Hyrcanus had destroyed the temple on Mount Gerizim in 128 BC and Shechem in 107 BC that the Samaritan sect split off in anger from Judaism.

THE EARLY JEWISH RELIGION UNDER HELLENISM

After the chaos of the battles between the Diadochoi ('successors'), Alexander's victory over the Persians in 333 BC brought Judaea under the rule first of the Ptolemies and then of the Seleucids, but did not bring marked changes in politics or religion. Politically, Judaea kept its partly autonomous self-rule, although it was exercised by the high priest, who extended his authority to include not just the College of Priests but also the Council of Elders. As for the politics of religion, the Macedonians allowed Judaeans to live according to the laws of their fathers.

Nevertheless, the Hellenistic period was a time of transition. There were hardly any more developments influencing the form of Israel's religion; the last scriptures to be incorporated into the Hebrew Bible stem from this time (third–second century BC). But new developments that would shape Judaism and Christianity began in this time, for example piety based on the Torah, apocalypticism, or the creating of religious sects such as in Qumran. After the brothers of the former northern kingdom of Israel had split their cult off from Jerusalem one can justifiably speak for the first time of a specific 'Jewish Religion'.

Apart from with the Samaritans, rivalry was above all being taken into the sphere of Hellenism, which represented the greatest challenge for the early Jewish religion of the third and second centuries BC. In the face of this fascinating culture that embraced east and west, the question of Jewish identity arose again: the strict religious apartness that had been cultivated when the Jews were a threatened minority during the exile and the early post-exilic period was a considerable hindrance to the now much larger ethnic group who wished to participate in international intellectual and economic life. But (apart from a few initiatives) the meeting of Greek and Jew was not fruitful. Those who promoted an opening out of the Jewish religion in the direction of Hellenism were mostly Jewish aristocrats, following their own economic interest regardless, and they had been quick to deny their religion according to the pious of both upper and lower classes. The notorious social and religious split was now made worse by a cultural split. The Jews of the Hellenistic period were chiefly concerned with maintaining the religion of their fathers and opposing the influence of Hellenism.

The books of Chronicles, which probably date from the first half of the third century BC, are consciously non-Hellenistic. The leaders of the Jewish community were obsessed with the problem within Israel of the rival Samaritan sect. In order to refute their claim to legitimacy based on the Torah they decided that the foundation history should incorporate the texts that laid emphasis on the Temple at Jerusalem and David's monarchy, that is, above all the books of Samuel, Kings and the Prophets. It is true that this presented a problem; when the Judaic councils had canonized the Torah they had excised the history of the monarchy because of anti-monarchic reservations, and had not been keen on the writings of the prophets for fear they might arouse enthusiasm. This is why they ordered the revision of Dtr. H. so that on the one hand their reservations might be lifted, and on the other it might provide a clearer justification for their leadership as opposed to the Samaritans. The work that resulted from these efforts is a great harmonizing synthesis. It is so

crammed with quotations and references to other texts that it probably came from the pen of a new type of professional, a Bible scholar, who since the canonization of the Torah had supervised the transmission of the text.

Beside the foundation epoch of early times, which they reduced to the genealogical framework important for the creation of a Jewish identity after the exile (1 Chr. 1–9), the Bible scholars placed emphasis on a second foundation epoch in the reigns of David and Solomon, making it take up nearly half of their composition (1 Chr. 11 – 2 Chr. 9). This identified as the purpose and high point of the history of Israel and of God's choosing of his people the construction and furnishing of the Temple at Jerusalem. However, the scholars revised the account in Dtr. H: they acknowledged that the model for David's Temple – like Moses' Ark of long ago – had been revealed by Yahweh (1 Chr. 28:11ff.; cf. Ex. 35:9) and built by Solomon to Yahweh's exact specifications, but it was no longer a royal possession, being mostly financed by the people (1 Chr. 29:1–9, 14, 17). It is true that the personnel of the cult had been decided by David down to the smallest detail. However, the priests and the Levites were no longer the king's officials, but received an independent maintenance grant from the people (2 Chr. 31:2ff.; cf. Num. 18). In other words, the scholars took from Dtr. H. the proof that only the Temple at Jerusalem was the sanctuary chosen by Yahweh, but at the same time they excluded the option of its being a state cult. As they presented it, the cult at Jerusalem was in no way heretical (as the Samaritans claimed) but everything in it was ordered exactly according to the prescriptions of the Torah.

It was more difficult to deal with the monarchy. The scholars strove to dispel the problems this presented by, on the one hand, referring to Nathan's promise to Solomon, that the line of David would rule for ever, but restricting it to apply only as far as Solomon (1 Chr. 17:11ff.); on the other hand making it clear that the monarchy was subservient to Yahweh's kingship over Israel (1 Chr. 17:14; 28:5; 29:23; 2 Chr. 9:8; 13:8). They presented the harmonious image of an ideal monarchy, always consulting this people and caring tirelessly for them (2 Chr. 20:21; 19:4–11). In doing this they were trying to ward off aspirations from the line of David and to open the way for the long-desired constitutional monarchy.

Apart from this, the Bible scholars introduced the Psalms and the prophetic tradition into their work of history. They countered the gloomy view of history given by Dtr. H with the certainty often expressed in the cult, that Yahweh's mercy would last for ever (2 Chr. 20:21; cf. Ps. 117). Since salvation was present in the cult at Jerusalem, there could not be any fateful entanglements in its history. Instead, they gathered from their readings of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah (2 Chr. 20:20; 15:2; cf. Is. 7:9; Jer. 29:13f.) that each generation would be punished only for its own transgressions (cf. 2 Chr. 36) and that God gave each generation a new opportunity for salvation, if they turned honestly towards him. In this view of history there was no longer a 'too late', of which the prophets of judgment had so emphatically warned. Therefore even the brothers in Samaria who had been led astray could be invited to convert and to join the cult of Jerusalem (2 Chr. 30).

Such a view reduced the message of the prophets to an individual optimistic teaching of fair reward, reminiscent of the wisdom of the pious. The prophets pointed the way to a righteous life, and that was all. This consciously negated the eschato-

logical interpretation of the prophecies by the lower class. The harmonious picture of history built up by members of the middle class left no place for social upheavals.

The interpretative work of the Chronicles was intended to be nothing less than a revision of the canon. Its broad but harmonizing syntheses led the way to the canonization of the minor prophets (Joshua to 2 Kings) and the major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, book of the Twelve), completed by at the latest the end of the third century BC. It was also the first step towards a specially Jewish canon that was not approved by the Samaritans.

Also on the level of personal piety there began in the Hellenistic period a specially Jewish form of personal theology, 'Torah piety' (Pss 1, 19, 119). It, too, probably derives from the position of the Bible scholars. Once the Torah had been canonized as the basis of the official Yahweh religion this professional group was also concerned with making it the basis of an individual's relationship with God. They set at the centre of this new piety a strongly emotional, even erotic, relationship to the scriptures (Pss 119:47, 97, 131). It was no longer merely general maxims of wisdom as in the personal theology of the pious upper class but the commandments of the Torah that should pervade the ethical relationship of trust in God (119:1-16, 73). No longer would general experiences of God, but intensive meditation on the scriptures (1:2), reveal God's merciful presence (119:18, 105). 'Acting according to the Torah' and 'Learning from the Torah' were (for the first time) declared to be a demanding Jewish *praxis pietatis*, which required every layperson to become a 'little theologian'.

But this ideal of Jewish piety met with resistance. In the upper class at Jerusalem there were also groups who oriented their philosophy of life rather more towards the international currents of the Hellenistic world around them. They are exemplified in the figure of the teacher of wisdom Qoheleth, active in Jerusalem around the middle of the third century BC.

Drawing on sceptic philosophical traditions, Qoheleth subjected the wisdom of piety to a pitiless critique. Its teaching of two kinds of retribution, that would reward the pious and punish the sinner, could easily be refuted (7:15-18; 8:12-14) from the harsh reality of the Ptolemaic economic system, built upon personal advantage and competition (Eccles. 4:4). Further, all its optimistic belief that one could arrange one's life in a way wise and pleasing to God seemed to Qoheleth an illusion, since humans are subject to an unchangeable destiny and cannot understand God's intentions (Eccles. 3:1-11). Death is inevitable and wipes out all differences between wise person and fool (2:12-17; 9:11f.). In the face of the meaninglessness of all happenings the only possibility for people is to enjoy life to the full as best they can (2:24; 3:12f., 22; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7-9).

In saying this, Qoheleth was probably recognizing that the harmonizing piety of his time had lost touch with reality; he gave a pitiless analysis of the social fragmentation in his community (Eccles. 4:1; 5:7f.; 10:5f.) but unlike the pious upper-class circles behind the book of Job he did not intervene in the conflicts. He merely saw them as the expression of the basic absurdity of human life. But the result was that Qoheleth saw God as a distant, unapproachable dispenser of destiny. He could hardly be reached by human prayer (5:1f.); it was madness to accuse him as Job had done (6:10f.). Qoheleth was certainly not one of the sinners who pretended to be pious but showed by their ungenerous behaviour that they had stepped outside

Israel's relationship with God (8:11f.), but in the face of his critical rationality the personal piety in Israel, which until then had been characterized by a particularly close and living relationship with God, mostly melted away.

Thus it is no surprise that at the beginning of the second century BC a conservative teacher of wisdom and Bible scholar from Jerusalem, Jesus Sirach, began to attempt to create a personal Jewish theology of wisdom that would satisfy even the demands of high philosophy. In his opinion, the universal wisdom that functions as a means of revelation between the Creator and the whole world (cf. Prov. 8) had, by God's command, found a permanent resting place in Israel (Jes. Sir. 24:1-12). This meant that it was especially effective in Israel in the services in Jerusalem and in the Torah (24:10, 23). By saying this, Jesus Sirach transferred Yahweh's choosing of Israel over into the theology of wisdom, and made it possible to unite universality and particularity even at the level of a personal philosophy of life. All other people might orientate themselves to the international currents of Hellenistic philosophy, but for Jews the orientation for their lives could be found only in the Temple cult and in the Torah. A wisdom divorced from the Torah, as represented by Qoheleth, could not exist for Israel in the opinion of Jesus Sirach; on the contrary, when each Jew bathed in the fountain of wisdom that sprang from the Torah thanks to its exposition by scholars, he was enjoying an unusually large share of universal divine wisdom (24:23-34). When Jesus Sirach revealed that God had made all creation with differences and opposites, giving humankind freedom of choice, he was promoting the idea that Israel's peculiar position with regard to the personal laws of daily life could be seen as part of God's wisdom (33:7-18). With this, Jesus Sirach created a theological and philosophical basis that allowed a specifically Jewish personal theology of wisdom to coexist confidently with the Hellenistic world.

The actual battle against integration in Hellenism was fought increasingly on the ground not of personal piety but of eschatological prophecy and the new apocalypticism. After the downfall of the Persian empire and Alexander's campaign of 332 BC had not brought the great switch to salvation expected since Deutero-Isaiah (Zech. 9:1-8), but on the contrary the battles between the Diadochoi that followed (321-301 BC) could be regarded only as the fall of the great power and a sign of divine anger (11:4-16), prophetic groups among the opposition and in the lower class became convinced that there would have to be a terrible Day of Judgment, with God judging the world and Jerusalem, before Yahweh could set up his kingdom in Zion (Zech. 12-14; Is. 24-6). The entire sinful world with its proud Hellenistic city culture would have to pass away (Is. 24:1-6, 10ff.; 25:1-5), the kings would have to be put in prison and the sinners destroyed (24:21f.; 25:4f.) before Yahweh would prepare a feast for the hungry and oppressed poor and set aside all their sorrows (25:6-9). In their worship, the prophetic circles in the lower class pleaded for God's liberating court of justice to come (26:7-18) and firmly believed that even the pious dead would share in the future salvation (26:19). This brought them for the first time to a genuine belief in resurrection: when their deliverance came, then even death, which now separated them from God, would be set aside (25:8).

This eschatological prophecy, which was developed in groups of outsiders, became more relevant to the mainstream when Judaea, after a long period of stable Ptolemaic rule, fell, from 221 BC, between the fronts of the Seleucids (Antiochus III [223-187

BC]) and the Ptolemies, and in 198 BC were added to the Seleucid empire. During the political and military disputes, the conflicts between the conservatives and the Hellenists (who were radical to a greater or lesser degree) split the Judaeen upper class, reaching a critical intensity and giving a new edge to the underlying social conflict with the lower class (who mostly remained faithful followers of Yahweh). This explosive situation erupted for the first time at the end of the third century BC in a rising against the Ptolemies, which failed (Dan. 11:14), but then after a short time of consolidation broke out again more strongly from 167 BC in the Maccabean civil war, after the radical Hellenists, supported by Antiochus IV (175–164 BC) had attempted to turn Jerusalem, in its politics and its cult, into a Hellenistic community.

These anti-Hellenistic revolts were regarded from the beginning through the eschatological perspective of the prophet-oriented groups of the lower class as the arrival of God's Day of Judgment before the great turnaround to salvation. This perspective was accepted by the population because of a new eschatological theology that had been developed by scholars among the opposition; they appear in the Maccabean rebellion as *Hasidim* ('Group of the Pious') (1 Macc. 2:42; 7:13). Their work was based on the eschatological prophecies that had been voiced from the middle of the third century and was called 'apocalyptic'.

Typical of this apocalyptic theology was a systematization of eschatological expectations in a clear sequence of events, the concept of an end of history and a new 'Thereafter' brought in by God, and the synchronization of their own time with the drama of the end of time, that is, shortly before the expected transformation.

In the sense of this apocalyptic concept, the author of the Aramaic book of Daniel (Dan. 2–7*), writing during the first phase of the rebellion, at the end of the third century BC, produced an anti-Hellenistic theology of political resistance; using ancient legendary tales about Daniel, the famous interpreter of dreams from the Babylonian and Persian periods, he pointed out that God's kingship had prevailed previously against the emperors, and that their empires had lasted only so long as they acknowledged Yahweh's rule (Dan. 3:31–3; 4:31f.; 5:17–30; 6:26–8). Borrowing Greek concepts of four empires and epochs declining in quality, he created a theory of the political history of the world, which after the empires of Babylon, the Medes and then the Persians had reached an absolute nadir with the all-destroying Hellenistic empire. He demonstrated the similarity and the sequence of the four empires in the dream-vision of Nebuchadnezzar (2:31ff.) of an imposing giant statue shattered by a falling rock that symbolizes God's kingship (2:34ff.). This collapse of world history would come about without any human intervention, but all pious people were called to resist (to the point of martyrdom [Dan. 3:6]) the totalitarian claims of the Hellenistic rulers expressed in the latter's ruler-cult. The author depicted Daniel seeing in his final vision that after the destruction of the increasingly bestial empires the authority of God would be given to a 'son of man' (7:1–15); this cheered the community of the pious (vv. 18, 27), hearing that after their severe sufferings under the murderous self-idolizing Hellenistic rulers they would soon participate in a completely new and humane form of government.

In the second, much more violent, phase of the rebellion, sparked off by brutal measures intended to enforce Hellenism on worshippers of Yahweh under Antiochus

IV in 167 BC, including the erection of an altar for Baal-Shamem/Zeus Olympios in the Temple at Jerusalem, the Aramaic book of Daniel was extended with a Hebrew framework (Dan. 1:8–12) and made more relevant. The author of the Hebrew book regarded the impertinent desecration of the Temple as the beginning of the Last Days. He even tried to use learned calculations, interpreting Jeremiah's reference to the 70 years of exile (Jer. 29:10) as 70×7 (490 years) (Dan. 9) in order to find the exact time from then (probably 165 BC) to the end, coming to varying results (9:27: 3.5 years; 8:14: 1,150 days; 12:11: 1,290 days; 12:12: 1,335 days). And he tried to increase confidence in the accuracy of his prediction of the events of the Last Days by making Daniel predict the entire history of the Hellenistic empire in the guise of a vision (Dan. 10–12). But unlike the Maccabees, who wanted to use force of arms to overcome Antiochus and the radical Hellenists who were his allies, and unlike the apocalyptic teachers who interpreted this battle as the divine battle at the end of time before the advent of salvation (1 *Enoch* 89f.), the author of the Hebrew book of Daniel believed that it was the archangel Michael alone who would rescue the pious (Dan. 12:1). The difficult times before the end he interpreted as a testing time of probation that would decide whether the pious and their apocalyptic teachers would share in the final salvation (11:32–5; 12:10). He expected a resurrection of two kinds, to external life or to eternal shame (12:2), from which only the apocalyptic teachers who had unerringly shown others the way to righteousness would proceed in glory (12:3). Thus, unlike the author of the Aramaic book of Daniel, the author of the Hebrew parts was concerned that there should be a purely religious, passive, non-violent resistance in the turbulent situation of the civil war. Instead of an alternative model of the political government of the future (Dan. 7) he gave an individual view of salvation consisting of resurrection and Day of Judgment.

The apocalyptic theology contributed greatly to the success of the fight to preserve Jewish identity in the face of the pressure to conform to Hellenism in the first half of the second century BC. The prophesying that had long been officially marginalized – even in its eschatological version – became a widely accepted constituent of Israel's religion. Even if the immediate expectations of the apocalyptic writings inspired by the Maccabean crisis were not fulfilled precisely – it was possible to cleanse the Temple of Hellenistic syncretism in 164 BC, but the hoped-for arrival of Yahweh's reign did not occur; instead, the Maccabean war of liberation led to the beginning of the Hasmonaeon monarchy – yet the new viewpoint, looking for an apocalypse at the end of time, became an important element of both early Judaism and (to an even greater degree) of Christianity. Israel's religion originated as a historical religion of deliverance. With the idea of apocalyptic it developed into an eschatological religion of salvation.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

JUDAISM AT THE TURN OF THE ERA

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Jarl Fossum

To describe Judaism and Jewishness at the turn of the era is no easy task. What was the common denominator of the Jewish religion? Who was a Jew? Today we identify a person as Jewish on the basis of her or his adherence to Judaism and/or on the basis of the person's filiation. Even if a person is of non-Jewish extraction, he or she has to be considered Jewish if having converted to Judaism. When considering the filial aspect, it must be borne in mind that the Jewish family is matrilinear. One is Jewish if one's mother is Jewish: the actual religion of one's parents or oneself does not matter.

These circumstances cause problems in Israel today. Civil law does not accept a Jew as *'oleb*, someone who has the right to immigrate to Israel under the Law of Return of 1949, if he or she has embraced, say, Christianity. The religious authorities, on the other hand, build on the Rabbinic rulings which laid down that even a person who has lapsed from Judaism remains a Jew.¹

PHARISAIC RABBINISM

How was the situation at the turn of the era? The rabbinic interpretations of the Torah, the Mosaic Law, and its applications to everyday situations in a society far removed from that of the time of its writing, are set down in the Mishnah, 'Teaching'.² The Mishnah was written around 200 CE, but its promulgators obviously had forebears: they are apparently the Pharisees, a group well known from the Gospels.³ In the Gospels we often find the junction 'Scribes and Pharisees' (e.g. Matt 15.1; 23.2, 13-15; Mark 7.1, 5; Luke 6.7), but this should not mislead us to think that the names are more or less synonymous. More than one group had scribes, that is, men trained in the interpretation of the Bible.⁴ Mark's expression 'Scribes of the Pharisees' (2.16) seems to be a pointer in the right direction. There can be no denying the fact that the 'Scribes of the Pharisees' were the main forerunners of the rabbis.

Who were the Pharisees? 'Rabbi' simply means 'master' or 'teacher'. As is the case with the term 'scribe', not each and every rabbi was a Pharisee. Jesus was addressed as a 'rabbi' (Mark 10.51; John 20.16),⁵ but he is never called a Pharisee; the New Testament portrays the Pharisees as the opponents of Jesus.⁶ The name 'Pharisee' is probably derived from the word *Perushim*, 'separatists'. The Pharisees constituted a

party of lay people who were very serious about the injunctions in the Torah that *all* Israel should be a holy people and a nation of priests.⁷ The Pharisees took the priestly purity rules to be incumbent upon the entire people. Moreover, the priests had deserted Israel and her God; therefore, penance had to be done by the people.

Now the priestly purity regulations were extremely difficult to practise for people at large, and the Pharisees distinguished themselves from the *'Am ha-Aretz*, the 'people of the land'. As time went by, however, the climate became somewhat milder: the *'Am ha-Aretz* remained despised but not rejected.⁸

The Pharisees got together in clubs of *Haberim*, 'Associates', which developed into veritable schools where the Law was studied and new rules formulated so that it could be made applicable to everyday situations in society. The most famous schools at the turn of the era were *Beth Hillel* and *Beth Shammai*, named after two teachers who lived in the first century BCE. Hillel is attributed with seven rules for scriptural interpretation, so-called *middoth*. At the beginning of the second century CE, Rabbi Ishmael increased the number of *middoth* to thirteen. Later we hear about no less than thirty-two *middoth*.⁹

The rabbis distinguished carefully between the biblical books, the written Law, and their own writings, called the 'oral Law'. The biblical period was regarded as a closed chapter, and the rabbis deliberately abandoned the literary forms and language of the Bible.¹⁰ The Holy Spirit, the prophetic inspiration, had departed from Israel.¹¹ The expert decisions of the rabbis, reached by means of the various *middoth*, replaced pronouncements in the name of God.

On the other hand, the rabbis distinguished carefully between the written Law and the oral Law on the one hand and the 'extraneous books' on the other. Although the rabbinic writings (the oral Law) are full of arguments and discussions, the rabbis claimed to be keepers of a tradition reaching back to the revelation given to Moses on Mount Sinai.¹² The oral Law as well as the written Law was believed to be God's revelation. The rabbis were the successors of Moses, and everything produced outside rabbinic circles was simply the work of fallible human minds. Working out a program of ritual and legal practice according to their conceptions of what was central in their religion, the rabbis frowned upon other topics.¹³

AN ANACHRONISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF JUDAISM AT THE TURN OF THE ERA

Pharisaic Rabbinism is usually what we today understand by the term 'Judaism'. This is a religion that is led by rabbis, teachers of the Law and conductors of the synagogue worship. The term is acceptable when applied to the present-day situation, but it is rather misleading when being used of Israelite religion at the turn of the era, for such a usage implies that what we know about Judaism today is a measure for what Jews or at least 'orthodox' Jews believed and practised about 2,000 years ago.

An example from one of Jacob Neusner's numerous books on Judaism may illustrate this point. In his 'Glossary' to *An Introduction to Judaism*, Neusner brushes the Sadducees away with two lines – he describes them as a 'sect'. The Pharisees, on the other hand, get ten positive lives without any sect label.¹⁴

THE SADDUCEES

Like the Pharisees, the Sadducees are often mentioned in the New Testament. Like the Pharisees, they quarrelled with Jesus. But the Pharisees and the Sadducees did not agree, and the description of the Sadducees as a sect goes back to the Pharisaic rabbis – we find it already in the Mishnah.¹⁵ Now we ought to consider that the spiritual head of the Jews before the fall of the temple in 70 CE was a Sadducee, namely the high priest. The Jerusalem temple, the religious centre for the majority of Jews, was managed by the Sadducees. It ought to be clear that the Sadducees cannot be written off as a ‘sect’.

On the other hand, the Sadducean party had several facets. The name of the party probably derives from that of Šadoq, the priest of David and Solomon. Now the last legitimate Šadoqite high priest, Onias III, was deposed by the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, in 175 BCE. Although the high priesthood became a prize in the troubled politics of the time, the Sadducean party remained in control of the temple. It is true that the Sadducees at the turn of the era cannot be described as a strictly priestly party, for lay people from the new money aristocracy had made their way into the Sanhedrin, the ‘Great Assembly’, the highest judicial and religious organ of the Jews, which traditionally had been dominated by the priests. The priestly Sadducees and the new lay Sadducees joined forces in a law-and-order policy: they worked together with the Romans who had occupied Palestine since 64 BCE; by their cooperation with the occupying power, the Sadducees could profit from temple taxes and trade.¹⁶

This does not mean that it is right to describe the Sadducees as a ‘sect’ in a derogatory sense. Josephus, a first century CE historian (with a Sadducean ancestry), sided with the Romans and fought Jewish insurrectionists. Still, Josephus is regarded by most as a good Jew, apparently because he fought the Romans to begin with and wrote positively on Jewish history even after he had changed side.¹⁷

THE ZEALOTS

There were other groups than the Pharisees and the Sadducees. One of them was that of the Zealots, whose movement appears to have been made up of people from different social strands, the majority probably being Galilean tenants. The Zealots killed Jews they did not trust as well as Romans, thereby breaking the commandment of Exodus 20.13 (‘Thou shalt not kill’ – by which members of the People of Israel of course are indicated). Still, the Zealots are reckoned as belonging to the Jewish fold: they fought against the Romans, and the Jews they killed (before they started to fight among themselves) were Sadducees.¹⁸

THE ESSENES

The Essenes constitute the Jewish party about which we are best informed (the Christians being excluded). This is due to the fact that we have obtained so much Essene text material. We do not possess Sadducean or Zealot texts, and – as mentioned above – the first Pharisaic–rabbinic writings date from about 200 CE. Until

the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls we were dependent upon the descriptions of the Essenes made by Josephus, the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, who lived in the same century as Josephus, and the Roman author Pliny the Elder, also of the same century.¹⁹ Right after World War II, however, a huge library of Essene writings was discovered at Qumran at the north-west bank of the Dead Sea. Thus we speak of the Qumran-Essenes being a branch of the wider Essene movement.²⁰

The Essenes, whose name probably derives from *Ḥasidim*, the 'Pious Ones', took an evasive attitude to society at large. In this they were similar to the Pharisees, but the Qumran-Essenes at least took this attitude to its extreme by isolating themselves in the wilderness well removed from Jerusalem and its temple.²¹ The Qumran-Essenes were not against the temple *per se*, but against the priesthood, which – in their opinion – had desecrated the temple. The high priest in Jerusalem was not a true descendant of Šadoq; the leaders of the Qumran society were the true 'Sons of Šadoq' (1Q S 5.2, 8).²²

The Essenes do not seem to have been closer to the Pharisees than to the Sadducees. The Qumran writings criticize those who 'seek after smooth things' (4Q p Nah 1.2, 7; 2.2, 4; 3.3, 7), a characterization that may very well be applied to the Pharisees, who did not adhere to a literal interpretation of the Law but tried to adapt the Torah to suit life in a society different from that of ancient Israel.²³

In rejecting the oral tradition, the Essenes were at one with the Sadducees. It is true that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead and predestination,²⁴ whereas these tenets are found in Essene writings,²⁵ but it must be kept in mind that the Essenes – in contrast to the Sadducees – did not have a closed canon. The book of Daniel, cherished by the Qumran-Essenes, teaches that the resurrection of the righteous is part of the consummation of God's plan.²⁶ The canon of the Sadducees was the Pentateuch alone.

Moreover, in contrast to the Pharisees as well as the Sadducees, the Essenes lived in the world of the Bible. Continuing the prophetic tradition, the Essenes subjected the life of their community to the guidance of men such as the 'Legitimate Teacher',²⁷ who possessed the divine spirit. Being prophetically inspired, the Teacher could issue decisions beyond questioning. This is seen in the document designated as 4Q MMT, where the Teacher's rulings are handed down like biblical ordinances.

JESUS AND THE FIRST CHRISTIANS

It has become theologically correct to say that Jesus was a Jew and that primitive Christianity was a form of Judaism. This is all true, but the view cannot be upheld if we take Pharisaic rabbinism as a criterion for what was Judaism at the turn of the era.

G. Vermes has in a couple of books sought to bring Jesus into harmony with Jewish teachers on the Law. Thus, Vermes attempts to bring Jesus' healings on the Sabbath in line with the rabbinic dictum that it is permissible to do work on the seventh day if the purpose is to save life.²⁸ But now there is no discussion about the likelihood that the man with a withered hand was in danger of losing his life.

In legal matters Jesus was similar to the Essenes in that he referred directly to the Law and not to the 'tradition of men' (Mark 7.7–9). In the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew portrays Jesus as the, or at least *a*, prophet like Moses who gives the right interpretation of the Law at the same time as he breaks down the exposition based on oral tradition: 'You have heard that it was said to the ancients . . . But I say to you . . .' (5.21; etc.). Although the community may be responsible for the antitheses, we may assume that the core of the teaching goes back to Jesus himself. This appears to be quite evident in the case of the prohibition of divorce, where Jesus' commandment supersedes even the written Law.²⁹

Employing scriptural proof-texts for his activity to a rather limited extent,³⁰ Jesus stood forth as a charismatic figure by his own *fiat*.³¹ He was different from the 'scribes'.

What about Paul, the most productive author in the New Testament? Paul was a Pharisaic rabbi who kept the Law.³² Paul is in fact the Pharisee who is best known to us. Now how many descriptions of Pharisaism reckon with Paul? Paradoxically, it might be quite right to exclude a discussion of Paul when considering Pharisaism. Paul said that Christ was the end of the Law and that, although the Law was good,³³ it could not effect salvation.³⁴ No Pharisaic rabbi said anything similar.

There were other forms of Judaism at the turn of the era than those surveyed above. A text in the Talmud – a huge collection of rabbinic traditions consisting of elaborations upon the Mishnah – says that there were as many as twenty-four *minim*, 'sects' or 'heresies', at the time of the destruction of the temple.³⁵ Christian sources usually speak about seven sects.³⁶ The numbers should not be taken literally but seen as conventional (e.g. the number of tribes multiplied by two, or the number of priestly classes; the number of days in the week, or the seven planets), but the picture emerging from these categories is that Judaism at the turn of the era was highly complex.

THE TERRITORIES

We also have to consider Galilee and the Galileans, Samaria and the Samaritans, Idumaea and the Idumaeans, and finally the Jewish diaspora. Galilee had a bad reputation. Already Isaiah 9.1 speaks of 'Galilee of the Gentiles'. At the turn of our era John 1.46 repeats the Judean view that 'nothing good' can come from Galilee. The province was separated from Judaea by Samaria and lay open to Gentile influence from the west, north and east. The most concrete example of such an influence appears to be found in the mosaic depictions of the sun-god Helios in Galilean synagogues. Here the very beginning of the Ten Commandments is torpedoed.

The Galileans were not the only Jews who venerated the material manifestation of the deity under the image of the sun; there are indications to the effect that the Essenes did the same.³⁷ Moreover, illustrations are not lacking at religious sites in Judaea.³⁸

What about Samaria and the Samaritans? Traditionally the origin of the Samaritans is found in 2 Kings 17. This chapter relates that the Israelites in the northern kingdom of Israel were deported by the Assyrian king, who turned the country into one of his provinces (Samaria, the name of the capital, being extended to the entire land). Foreigners being brought into the country grafted a superficial Yahweh cult upon their own religion and continued the worship on the high places made by the

Shomronim, an anachronistic term designating the people in the northern kingdom of Israel.

It has now become clear that the account in 2 Kings 17, being part of the Deuteronomistic centralization programme, is a strong Judaeen polemic against the Israelite cult at Bethel.³⁹ It has been known for a long time that only a small percentage of the population in the northern kingdom was carried away; the colonists who arrived were in a minority and adopted the cult of Yahweh. The Samaritans as they have been known throughout the centuries are devout Yahweh worshippers, sacrificing lambs at Passover on their holy mountain, Mount Gerizim, every year until this date.

Josephus's representation of the Samaritans is highly polemical, and he is just as critical of the Idumaeans. Idumaea was originally a kingdom south of Judaea. The male part of the population had been forcibly circumcised during the Jewish campaign led by the Hasmoneans against the Syrian rulers of Israel in the second century BCE. The Idumaeans had become adherents to the Jerusalem cult, and Herod the Great, an Idumaeen, who became the client king of the Romans when they occupied Palestine in 64 BCE, made the Jerusalem temple into a magnificent compound. Still, Josephus (at least in his later works) carefully distinguishes the Idumaeans from the Jews, using the latter term to refer to people of Judaea proper and characterizing Herod the Great as a 'half-Jew'.⁴⁰

What about the Jewish diaspora, the Jews who lived beyond the borders of Palestine? We know that there were temples in other places than Jerusalem. In Palestine itself there was a sanctuary for the biblical God in another place than Jerusalem, for the Samaritans continued to worship God on Mount Gerizim even after their temple had been destroyed.⁴¹

We also know that there were at least two Jewish temples in Egypt, one in Transjordan, and perhaps even one in Babylonia.⁴² The erection of these temples contravenes the stipulation in Deuteronomy that the cult of Yahweh should be centralized in Palestine.⁴³

It must also be mentioned that the synagogues in the diaspora had pictures. The synagogue in Dura-Europos in Mesopotamia is particularly famous because of its many magnificent illustrations of biblical scenes.⁴⁴

THE VENERATION OF YAHWEH

It appears that it is not easy to decide what constituted Judaism and Jewish identity at the turn of the era. As far as I know, no one was labelled as a Jew on the basis of physical characteristics (Egyptians and Arabs were also circumcised). Probably the only criterion we can work by is the answer to the question: Who venerated the god known by the biblical names Yahweh (Greek, *Iaō*), El, Elohim, Sabaoth, and so on? The answer may surprise us, for the god designated by these names was worshipped by Greek and Roman authors, by those who produced the Egyptian magical papyri, by those who made and wore certain amulets, and by some of the Gnostics.

Macrobius, a Platonic philosopher who wrote at the beginning of the fifth century CE, says, 'I declare *Iaō* to be the highest God of all' (*Saturnalia* I.18).⁴⁵ In the magical papyri – written in Greek, Demotic and Coptic – we time and again come across

adjurations of 'Lord Iaō', 'Iaō Sabaoth', and the like.⁴⁶ In like manner, the divine name 'Iaō' is very popular on magical amulets, where the deity often is depicted as a monstrous figure, for example with the head of a cock, the torso of a man, and a serpentine lower body.⁴⁷

The Gnostics, so called because they stressed the importance of revealed 'knowledge' (*gnōsis*) instead of faith, often spoke derogatorily about the biblical God, whom the Gnostics held to be the god of those who had faith but no *gnōsis*. However, this rule was not one without exceptions. The Church Father and heresiologist Irenaeus (ca. 180) quotes a cultic formula of some Gnostics belonging to the school of Valentinus, an Egyptian Gnostic who lived ca. 140 CE: 'I am redeemed; I am established; and I redeem my soul from this age and from all that comes from it in (or: through) the name of Iaō . . .' (*Against All Heresies* I.21.3). Clearly, Iaō is here the name of a redeeming power.

The same is the case of the Gnostic work *Pistis Sophia* (literally, 'Faith-Wisdom') from the third or fourth century CE. Here we find the 'Little Sabaoth' and the 'Great Sabaoth' as well as the 'Little Iaō' and the 'Great Iaō'.⁴⁸ These are all designations of beneficial powers.⁴⁹

The cult of the biblical God had become so diversified – through adoption, adaptation, conversion and intermarriage – that it could no longer be seen as the religion of one single nation. After the conquest of the Near East by Alexander the Great, the national religions disintegrated. The cult of the gods was no longer bound to a particular place and a particular people. This was also the case with the religion of the Jews. The close relationship between the Jewish religion and the Jewish nation is often emphasized,⁵⁰ but – as has been pointed out above – the idea of what constituted Judaism and Jewishness varied from group to group. The Law, including the Commandments, was interpreted differently. There were different Jewish sanctuaries, even beyond the borders of the Holy Land. The idea of Jewish nationality was not an invariable one.

Now it must be kept in mind that there were signs of universalism in ancient Israelite religion. The post-exilic prophets looked forward to a time when all peoples would worship in Jerusalem.⁵¹ There was even the idea that Yahweh would be worshipped in other countries.⁵²

What about the Jewish sanctuaries outside Palestine? Did non-Jews join in the cult at these places? During the period under Syrian rule in the second century BCE, the 'Highest God of Heavens', identical with the Phoenician Ba'al Shamem and the Greek Zeus Olympios, was worshipped in the Jerusalem temple. Undoubtedly some Jews, finding the biblical God in this theocracy, partook in the cult.⁵³

CANONICITY

If Macrobius, the magical texts and gems, and the Gnostics may be seen as representatives of the cult of the biblical God, what are we to make out of the concept of canonicity? There is no indication that Macrobius, the magicians and the Gnostics had a canon similar to the Jewish one. But how are we to understand the concept of canon at the turn of the era? The Writings, the third and last part of the Jewish canon, after the Law and the Prophets, were not clearly defined at that time.

There were also other Jewish writings at the turn of the era – what status did they have? These writings are referred to as apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. Apocryphal books (literally, ‘hidden’ or ‘secret’ books) are works that were ‘hidden away’ because they were found in the Greek translation of the Jewish Bible, which was the version used by the Christians. This group of writings includes important works such as the *Wisdom of Solomon* and *Ecclesiasticus* (the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*).⁵⁴ Now the Greek version of the Jewish Bible (the ‘Old Testament’ according to the Christians) was the product of Jewish translators working in Alexandria in pre-Christian times. It is anachronistic to call some of the books in this translation ‘apocryphal’ in a derogatory sense.

Pseudepigrapha are works written under a pseudonym, the name of a famous figure from the history of Israel. Thus, we have books of Adam, books of Enoch, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the *Apocalypse of Moses*, and so on. Now the Jewish canon itself contains pseudepigrapha. The book of Daniel is a classic example because it is not written by a prophet who lived at the time of the Babylonian exile, as is claimed in the book itself, but by a Jew who lived under the Hasmonean insurrection against Syrian supremacy in the second century BCE. Even the Torah, the fundamental part of the Jewish canon, is a pseudepigraphic work, for it was not written by Moses.⁵⁵

It appears that there were Jewish groups who held non-biblical works in higher esteem than the books traditionally reckoned as canonical. Thus, there is no indication to the effect that the Qumran-Essenes took Genesis to be more sacred than the book of *Jubilees*, a pseudepigraphic work said to have been written by Moses.

The so-called *Temple Scroll* of the Qumran-Essenes is a kind of deutero-Deuteronomy, but with the significant difference that God himself, and not Moses, addresses the People of Israel. Presumably the *Temple Scroll* had more authority than Deuteronomy.

The revision of Genesis that we find in the book of *Jubilees* and 1 *Enoch* may be compared to what is seen in some Gnostic writings. In the *Apocryphon of John* we often come across a flat rejection of ‘what Moses said’. This in itself does not mean that the Gnostic apocryphon is non-Jewish: the writing reveals intimate knowledge of the [first chapters](#) of Genesis and often offers a counter-interpretation of the actual scriptural passage by referring to another place in the Bible.⁵⁶ This is not dissimilar to Jesus’ interpretation of the law of divorce: Jesus distinguishes between the fundamental will of God, indicated by Genesis 1.27 and 2.24, on the one hand, and the will of God as expressed by the law-giver Moses, as found in Deuteronomy 24.1, on the other.

We should also bear in mind that there were stages of transition in the history of Gnosticism. In the so-called book of Baruch by a Gnostic called Justin,⁵⁷ we find a revision of the [first chapters](#) of Genesis, but here the gist of the biblical narrative has been maintained. Justin the Gnostic teaches that the creator god, Elohim by name, was originally separated from the highest God, the ‘Good’, but was no evil figure. Elohim is the first to be let into heaven, from where he sends out saviours to humankind so that others can make the same ascent as he did. The serpent is no incarnation of the saviour, as is the case in the *Apocryphon of John*. The eating from the Tree of Knowledge is still seen as a sin, not as a means of obtaining *gnōsis*, as is the case in the *Apocryphon of John*.

TERMINOLOGICAL QUESTIONS; CONCLUSION

It ought to be clear that we are in need of a terminology that is able to distinguish between the multifaceted Judaism at the turn of the era and the form of Jewish religion today. The term 'Late Judaism' (*Spätjudentum*) used for Judaism at the turn of the era is ridiculous. Judaism cannot be said to have been in throes for the last 2,000 years. Moreover, the term implies that Israelite religion *before* the turn of the era is to be called 'Judaism', but this is not appropriate if we compare that form of religion to modern Judaism.

A somewhat better term is 'Ancient Judaism', but this implies that there is a close relationship to Jewish religion in our times. Pharisaic rabbinism is taken as a gauge for the identification of Judaism and seen as the legitimate heir of 'Ancient Judaism'.⁵⁸

The elaborate term 'Israelite religion during the time of the second temple' focuses too strongly on the destruction of the temple in 70 CE as a watershed. There were Jewish groups who did not assign much significance to the temple.

The term 'Late Israelite Religion' is fortunate in so far as it implies a connection with the ancient Hebrew religion and suggests that the stage is set for something new. However, the adjective 'Israelite' is somewhat unfortunate because of its ethnic connotations. It has been shown above that people of the Hebrew tribe were not the only ones who worshipped the biblical God. The best term for Judaism at the turn of the era is 'Yahwism at the turn of the era'.

NOTES

- 1 On the problem of Jewish identity, see R. Posner, 'Halakhic Definitions', in 'Jew', *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem 1971), 10.23ff.
- 2 See H. Danby (trans.), *The Mishnah* (Oxford 1933 and reprints).
- 3 Scholars have questioned if there runs a direct line from the Pharisees to the later rabbis. It is true that the rabbis never refer to their forerunners as 'Pharisees', but by names such as *Ḥaberim*, 'Associates', and *Hakamim*, 'Sages'. However, it would be wrong to conclude that there was no connection whatsoever between the Pharisees mentioned in the New Testament and the later rabbis. On this question, see J. Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees* (Leiden 1971); E. Rivkin, *The Hidden Revolution* (London 1975).
- 4 See Matt 13.52; Luke 11.45–6.
- 5 The term 'rabbi' is obviously at the root of the frequent Synoptic term *didaskalos*, 'teacher', used of Jesus. See the article by K. H. Rengstorft in *TDNT* 4.421ff., 429ff.; R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer* (Tübingen 1981).
- 6 On this question, see J. W. Bowker, *Jesus and the Pharisees* (Cambridge 1973).
- 7 The linchpins were Exod 19.6 and Lev 19.2. The party of the Pharisees took its beginning from the ranks of the *Ḥasidim*, the 'Pious Ones', who supported the Hasmoneans (Maccabees) in the insurrection against Syrian rule in the second century BCE; see 1 Macc 2.42–3. Later, however, the 'Pious Ones' turned against the Hasmonean rulers who usurped the high priestly office; see Josephus, *Antiquitates* 13.171ff., 288ff. See the discussion by R. Meyer, 'Tradition und Neuschöpfung im antiken Judentum', *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie . . . zu Leipzig* 110/2 (1965), 18ff., 44ff. Cf. below, n. 21.
- 8 See E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London 1977), 152ff.
- 9 For the *middoth*, see C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (2nd edn, San Francisco 1989).

- 10 See *b. 'Abod Zar.* 58b; *b. Menab.* 65a.
 - 11 See *b. Sota* 48b; *b. Sanh.* 11a.
 - 12 See *m. Abot* 1.1.
 - 13 On the work of the rabbis, see J. Neusner, *The Oral Torah* (San Francisco 1986).
 - 14 See J. Neusner, *An Introduction to Judaism* (Louisville 1991), 462 on the Pharisees and 464 on the Sadducees.
 - 15 See *Berakhot* 9.5 (variant); *Erubin* 6.2; *Hagigah* 1.4; *Makkoth* 1.6; *Yadaim* 4.6, 7; etc.
 - 16 It was of importance to the Sadducees that Jerusalem should obtain the status of a *polis*, an autonomous city state. A *polis* was exempt from paying taxes to the central government and supplying military troops. Situated at the crossroads where trading routes met, the *poleis* became prosperous cities. The priestly as well as the lay Sadducees would profit if Jerusalem became a *polis*: if the city became an autonomous state (as actually was the case for a short time), non-Jewish people would worship their God in Jerusalem and pay taxes to the temple. On Sadduceism, see W. Buehler, *The Pre-Herodian War and Social Debate* (Basel 1974).
 - 17 Josephus described himself as one 'skilled in divining the meaning of the ambiguous utterances of the Diety' (*Bellum* 3.352). Perhaps he was reaching back to Jeremiah; see M. Hadas-Lebel, *Flavius Josephus* (New York 1989), 105, 175–8.
 - 18 On the Zealots, see M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten* (Leiden 1961).
 - 19 See especially T. S. Peall, *Josephus' Description of the Essenes Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Cambridge 1988).
 - 20 For the scholarly consensus that the Qumran people were Essenes, see J. H. Charlesworth, 'Qumran Scrolls and a Critical Consensus', in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth, New York 1993), xxxi–vii.
 - 21 The Essenes thus had basically the same origin as the party of the Pharisees (cf. above, n. 7). See already F. M. Cross, Jr, *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (London 1958), 107 n. 66; J. Carmignac, 'Les éléments historiques des "Hymnes" de Qumran', *Revue Qumran* 2 (1959/60), 20–1. The Qumran-Essenes, however, said that they had 'separated' (*parashnu*) from the people at large (4Q MMT, C7; cf. the interpretation of Isa 40.3 in 1Q S 8.13–14; 9.20; and see also 4Q p Ps 37.3, 1).
- There was perhaps an Essene enclave in Jerusalem; see R. Riesner, 'Jesus, the Primitive Community and the Essene Quarter of Jerusalem', in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Charlesworth), 198–234. The Jerusalem Essenes may be identified with the 'Herodians' mentioned in Mark 3.6 and 12.13. Josephus (*Ant.* 15.373ff.) relates that the Essenes were favoured by Herod the Great, during whose reign Qumran was not inhabited. See R. de Vaux, *Archaeology of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London 1973), 21–3.
- 22 The leaders of the Qumran-Essenes would seem to have been priests who would not support the Hasmoneans (Maccabees) when the latter usurped the high priestly office. For the expectation of the restoration of the temple cult under a just priesthood, see 1Q M 2.1ff.; 11Q Temple. Cf. 4Q MMT, B12.26–7, describing the present priesthood as unrighteous.
 - 23 Cf. 4Q MMT, B77 and C10–12: only the written Law is to be invoked; there is no collection comparable to the rabbinic *halakoth*, which were arrived at by oral tradition and majority vote.
 - 24 See Mark 12.18–27; Acts 23.8; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.173; 18.17. Josephus uses the term *heimarmené* to denote the Essene belief that God has foreordained everything. The word, meaning 'fate', is not a happy one, but it was well known in the Hellenistic world.
- According to Acts 23.8, the Sadducees also said that there is neither angel nor spirit. This is quite incomprehensible if taken to mean that they denied the belief in angels, for the Sadducees accepted the Pentateuch. D. Daube, 'On Acts 23: Sadducees and Angels', *JBL* 109 (1990), 493–7, has suggested that the Sadducees only denied the attested belief that a good person spent the span between death and resurrection in the mode of angel of spirit.
- 25 See 1Q S 4.2ff.; 3.15–16; 4Q MMT, C32–3.
 - 26 See 12.3, 10.
 - 27 The common translation 'the Teacher of Righteousness' is a misnomer.
 - 28 See Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (London 1993), 22–3, discussing Mark 3.1–6, etc.
 - 29 See Deut 24.1. Vermes, 33, discussing Jesus' view on the law of divorce. Now Mark 10.6–12 and 1 Cor 7.10 show clearly that divorce in itself and not 'remarriage following divorce'

fundamentally conflicts with Jesus' view on marriage. Matt 5.32 does not say anything else than that the man cannot be blamed for driving the woman to adultery by divorcing her in the case where she already has been unfaithful. However, even this is an addition to Jesus' words, as is seen from the parallel in Luke 16.18. Matt 19.9 goes further and allows for divorce and remarriage in the case of unfaithfulness. There is no allowance for this in Matthew's source, Mark 10.11–12.

- 30 See Mark 2.25–6.
- 31 See Mark 1.21–2, 27; 10.37; etc.
- 32 See e.g. Phil 3.3–6. Cf. Acts 21.24–6; 23.6.
- 33 See Rom 7.12.
- 34 See e.g. Rom 10.4 and, above all, the letter to the Galatians, especially ch. 3. On Paul's view of the Law, see E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia 1983); H. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought* (Edinburgh 1983).
- 35 See *p. Sanh.* 10.5.
- 36 See the survey by J. Fossum, 'Social and Institutional Conditions for Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible with Special Regard to Religious Groups and Sects', in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* (ed. M. Sæbø et al.; 1/1 Göttingen 1996), 240–3.
- 37 Josephus (*Bell.* 2.128–9) avers that the Essenes prayed at dawn, as if entreating the sun to rise. On Jewish sun worship at the turn of the era, see M. Smith, 'Helios in Palestine', *ErIsr* 16 (1982), 199–214.
- 38 See S. L. Y. Rahmani et al., 'The Tomb of Jason', *Atiqot* 4 (1964), 1–40. The tomb of Jason, probably a Sadducee, dates from about 80 BCE and contains depictions of ships.
- 39 On the origin of the Samaritans and their religion, see F. Dexinger, 'Der Ursprung der Samaritaner im Spiegel der frühen Quellen', in *Die Samaritaner* (ed. F. Dexinger and R. Pummer, Darmstadt 1992), 67–140.
- 40 Josephus characterizes Herod in *Ant.* 14.152. The people of Iturea north of Galilee would also seem to have been coerced to convert under the Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus; see Josephus, *Bell.* 1.68–9 and *Ant.* 13.299, and further E. Bammel, 'Ἀρχιερεὺς προφητεύων' *TLZ* 79 (1954), 351–6.
- 41 We might ask if the Samaritans really had a temple on Mount Gerizim; their sanctum may have been a 'high place'.
- 42 About the temple and religion of the Jews on the island of Elephantine in the Nile, see A. Vincent, *La Religion des Judéo-Araméens d'Eléphantine* (Paris 1937); and B. Porten, *The Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley 1968). About the temple at Leontopolis in Egypt, see C. T. R. Hayward, 'The Jewish Temple at Leontopolis: A Reconsideration', *JJS* 33 (1982), 429 ff. On the existence of a Jewish temple in Transjordanian Ammanitis, see L. H. Vincent, 'La Palestine dans les papyrus Ptolémaïques de Gerza', *RB* 29 (1920), 198–202, and especially P. W. Lapp, 'The Second and Third Campaigns at 'Arâq el-'Emir', *BASOR* 171 (1963), 8–39. On the possibility of the existence of a Jewish temple in Babylonia, see L. E. Browne, 'A Jewish Sanctuary in Babylonia', *JTS* 17 (1916), 400ff.
- Isa 19.19 may allude to the existence of an early Jewish temple in Egypt, probably in Thmuis; see J. Harmatta, 'Irano-Aramaica, zur Geschichte des frühhellenistischen Judentums in Ägypten', *Acta antiqua* 7 (1959), 404–9. There may even have been some kind of Jewish temple at Antioch; see Josephus, *Bell.* 7.44–5.
- 43 On the question whether the actual place was Gerizim or Zion, see Fossum 1996: 244f.
- 44 On the Dura-Europos synagogue, see J. Guttman (ed.), *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Re-Evaluation* (1932–72) (Missoula 1973).
- 45 Similar declarations often occur in texts of a syncretistic character where the proper name of the highest god is of no importance; see M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus* (3rd edn, Tübingen 1988), 473ff. Still, the fact that the name of Iao does occur in such texts cannot be considered insignificant.
- 46 See H. D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (2nd edn, Chicago 1992); M. Meyer and R. Smith (eds), *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco 1994).

- 47 On the name of Iaō in magic, see R. Ganschinietz, 'Iaō', *Pauly-Wissowa Realencyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* 9 (2nd edn, Stuttgart 1914), 698–721. On amulets, see especially C. W. King, *The Gnostics and Their Remains* (London 1864 and reprints).
- 48 On the 'Little Iaō', see [ch.7](#). On the 'Little Sabaoth', see especially chs 137 and 147. On the 'Great Iaō' and the 'Great Sabaoth', see chs 63 and 140. For the work *Pistis Sophia*, see C. Schmidt and V. MacDermot (trans.), *The Pistis Sophia* (Leiden 1978).
- 49 The name 'Little Iaō' derives from the Jewish term, the 'Little Yahweh', the special angel who was given God's own name and sent to lead the Hebrews from Egypt to the Promised Land; see Exod 23.21 and further H. Odeberg (ed. and trans.), 3 *Enoch* (Cambridge 1928, repr. New York 1973), [Part I](#), 33–4, and J. Fossum, 'Kyrios Jesus as the Angel of the Lord in Jude 5–7', *NTS* 33 (1987), 226–43.
- 50 See Hengel 1988, *passim*, especially the summary on 560.
- 51 See e.g. Isa 56.7; Micah 4.1–2; 7.12.
- 52 See Zeph 2.11. Cf. already Isa 19.19.
- 53 See Hengel 1988: 486ff., 503ff., and especially 515ff., 555f. As an early remarkable example of Israelite universalism we may cite Isa 45.1, where the prophet hails the Persian king Cyrus as the Messiah on account of the fact that Cyrus had conquered Babylon and allowed the exiled Judaeans to return home. Traditionally the Messiah was seen as an anointed Israelite king who would rule from Jerusalem.
- 54 They are part of the Catholic canon, while the Protestants follow the Jews.
- 55 See e.g. the claim in Deut 31.24.
- 56 For the *Apocryphon of John*, see B. Layton (trans. with introductions and annotations), *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City 1987), 23–51. On the Gnostic interpretation of scripture, see B. Pearson, 'Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in Gnostic Literature', in *Mikra* (Assen 1988), 635–52.
- 57 See Hippolytus, *Refutations of All Heresies* V.26.1–27.5 (introduced and trans. E. Haenchen, in W. Foerster (ed.), *Gnosis* 1; ET ed. R. McL. Wilson, Oxford 1972), 48–58.
- 58 A desperate attempt to establish a new terminology is made by G. Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis 1991). The title implies that there was a Judaism before 300 BCE that was continued after 200 CE. The mistakes of 'Late Judaism' and 'Ancient Judaism' are combined. Confusingly, Boccaccini also speaks of Christianity as one of the 'Judaisms of modern times' (15 *et passim*; italics mine). When Paul said that the observance of the Law had been abrogated by the sacrificial death of Christ, he was not simply expressing a 'different way of understanding the Law' (Boccaccini 1991: 17).

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

THE FIRST CHURCHES

Social life



Justin J. Meggitt

PROBLEMS

The social life of the first churches has been the subject of considerable debate over the last few decades (see Horrell 1999). Its study raises an array of problems, primarily of definition, interpretation and context, that have proved difficult to resolve. It is tempting to bypass these and go straight to the more concrete business of describing this aspect of early Christian existence but to do so involves making a host of implicit assumptions, which, if left unexamined, invalidate any reconstructions we might offer. Although attending to such critical preoccupations might seem to distance us from the past everyday reality that is the object of our study, nonetheless we must begin by addressing these initial difficulties, however abstract.

Firstly, we are faced with the problem of definition. How should we define 'social life' and what limitations does our definition impose? In what follows I shall assume that the 'social life' of the early Christians consists of their major interactions, both with their co-religionists and with others, and more specifically, those recurrent interactions that they considered significant, such as those between wives and husbands, or children and parents, or between one church member and another. But, while such a simple definition will do for our purposes, it will appear unhelpfully narrow to some and we should not forget that such social interactions shaped, and were shaped by, additional aspects of human life (such as those essentially biological, economic, legal, cultural or religious).

Secondly, there is the problem of translation, though not so much of words but of concepts. There is nothing self-evident, ahistorical or universal about how human beings organize themselves socially. Consequently, it is not immediately obvious how we should go about describing the interactions of the early Christians. Even using the term 'family' to describe the central domestic unit common at the time, and within which most significant interactions took place, is fraught with problems (see Moxnes 1997) given that primary social relationships in this period included those with individuals not connected by descent or marriage (see below). So how can we interpret the social interactions that took place in the first churches in a way that retains, as far as possible, the meanings and associations that they had within the original contexts and yet still makes some sense to us today? How do we prevent ourselves falling victim to anachronism or ethnocentrism in our analysis? Of too readily interpreting the social realities of the first Christians in the light of our own?

One means of avoiding these perils that has become particularly influential among some New Testament scholars today, largely as a consequence of the work of Malina (see esp. Malina 1981), is to develop generic models from cross-cultural readings of other comparable societies (in particular, the contemporary or near-contemporary Mediterranean). These then provide ways of ordering social data, explaining the operation of social processes, and the presence of certain social forms, and can be applied to the disparate evidence we can glean from the New Testament texts to allow us to make sense of the limited information we possess.

Such an approach has its advantages, perhaps the greatest being that its practitioners put their cards clearly on the table, and seek to stop their interpretations being plagued by implicit assumptions (Esler 1994: 12–13). However, such generic model-making also has significant weakness (for criticisms, see Garrett 1992; Meggitt 1998; Horrell 1999). It ignores or downplays the diverse and distinctive social forms and practices of inhabitants of different cultures within the eastern Mediterranean (the region within which Christianity first emerged), skating over significant differences (such as those between the permissible sexual activity of married men or the legal capacity of women – see below). Such an approach is also predicated upon a misplaced belief in the essential continuity between ancient and contemporary Mediterranean social life, ignoring, for example, evidence of striking discontinuity, such as that afforded by slavery, a complicated and complicating social phenomenon unknown in the region today but prominent in the early Roman Empire in which the first Christians lived. In addition, such model-making encourages a rather narrow perception of the nature of social life *per se*, as something primarily fixed and uncontested, with, as it were, all ancient Mediterranean people, whatever their geographical, ethnic, religious or class differences, reading from the same script and acting accordingly, with no room for conflict, change, nor the ‘moments and processes that bring surprise, uncertainty, ambiguity, and paradox’, which are characteristic features of human social existence (Fenn 1987: 98). The reassuring fit between the models created and early Christian data, something often held to justify the validity of the approach by its practitioners, is often, unfortunately, misleading, and regularly achieved by either applying a Procrustean bed to the evidence or treating it in the manner of a Rorschach ink blot.

A more fruitful way of dealing with these interpretative problems is to engage in a critical, inductive method, which seeks a dialogue between the past and present, and attempts a dialectical relationship between descriptions and explanations of social life that are given by the actors themselves (sometimes termed ‘emic’ explanations) and those given by modern interpreters (referred to as ‘etic’). Such an approach runs the risk of appearing epistemologically naïve, particularly in the current pessimistic intellectual climate (usefully demonstrated by the recent debate between Evans (1997) and Jenkins [1995]). And at its best, its constructions are ultimately provisional, open to constant review and criticism. But, nonetheless, it remains the most helpful way to approach the subject (and is later used to construct the descriptions).

Thirdly, we are faced with the problem of context. Interpreting the evidence demands that we know something about the original context within which it initially made sense and yet we have only a severely restricted knowledge of this: much of

our evidence for social practices in this period comes from a very limited range of unrepresentative literary sources of one kind or another, produced by a small elite who were largely unconcerned with life outside their rarefied circles and whose descriptions of social reality are of only limited value given their peculiar ideological and rhetorical preoccupations. This failing is all the more acute because almost all the early Christians came from the undocumented dead, the great mass of non-elite inhabitants of the Eastern Roman Empire (about 99 per cent of the total population; see Meggitt 1998), despite the recent popularity of attempts to argue the contrary (Theissen 1982; Meeks 1983). Consequently we know little about the context within which the first Christians lived. The value of neglected, more representative sources is gradually being recognized and new approaches that can help us construct appropriate, popular contexts within which to make sense of the limited pertinent data (Meggitt 1998) are being developed, but this work is still in its infancy. We should also bear in mind the salutary observation of Garnsey and Saller: what evidence we have 'is limited in quantity and quality. While these deficiencies should not be allowed to determine what historical questions are asked, they do circumscribe the field of questions to which convincing answers can be given' (Garnsey and Saller 1987: 108).

Finally we are faced with a host of more specific problems that need to be addressed if we are to make some sense of early Christian social life. Some of these are familiar to anyone engaged in the critical exegesis of the New Testament. For example, if we are to avoid using the New Testament in a simplistic and homogenizing way we have to make decisions about a host of often interrelated issues, such as the textual and chronological relationships of the documents that make up the New Testament, and their respective authors, genres, sources, redactions, and places of origin. And, as any critical introduction to the New Testament will indicate (e.g. Duling and Perrin 1994), these are not simple decisions to make, particularly as some of the assured results of previous generations of scholars become rather less so. Other problems are perhaps less familiar and are more specific to the subject of this study. For example, when faced with apparent inconsistencies in the social behaviour prescribed by an early Christian text, should we assume that such material comes from different communities, or even different stages in the development of one community (see, e.g., Theissen 1978)? Or is such an argument hopelessly anachronistic (something that may seem inconsistent to us might not have done so to early Christians; indeed it did not do so to the final redactors of the texts). What is the significance of the symbolic language of the first Christians for understanding the social life of the churches? Do the metaphors and analogies drawn from, for example, the household, market or other areas of social life, provide a fruitful source of data for determining their social practices and experiences, or do they reflect literary or oral conventions independent of social realities? Do the central symbols of the new communities (such as their various Christologies) allow us to determine, for example, their social integration or alienation (see, e.g., Meeks 1972), or is it wrong to assume such a fundamental correlation between the symbolic and social (for a useful discussion see Holmberg 1990)? Having touched on a few of the major problems inherent in the subject of our study (and there are, needless to say, plenty more) let us move on to the business of actually describing early Christian social life.

DESCRIPTION

It is helpful to distinguish between the 'public' and 'private' social lives of the members of the first churches, to differentiate between, for example, those interactions they had with the governing authorities of their day or at markets or festivals or games, and those that occurred within their households or their churches. Although, having said this, we should also be aware that there was a variety of ways that 'public' and 'private' could be conceptualized within the Empire (in fact some of these were themselves in a process of transition in this period; Wallace-Hadrill 1998). None coincide very closely with modern assumptions (e.g. some rooms within private houses could be considered public spaces, open to the uninvited; see, Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.5; Mk 14:3–9 and par.; 1 Cor. 14:23; Veyne 1987; Wallace-Hadrill 1988; Grahame 1997).

Social life: public

Authorities

The authorities encountered by the earliest Christians were essentially of two kinds: imperial and Jewish. Christian interactions with both are not easy to characterize.

Although the author of Revelation is unreservedly hostile towards the Roman authorities (Rev. 13 and 17), and suggests that relations with them were limited to persecutions of one kind or another (Rev. 1:9; 2:13; 6:9–11), most other New Testament texts are rather more equivocal and seem to evidence a rather more complicated state of affairs. For example, Paul could call on Christians to *submit* to the Roman authorities (Rom. 13; cf. also 1 Pet. 2:13–14; 1 Tim. 2:1–2; Tit. 3:1), and yet it is evident, from the punishments he suffered at the hands of their representatives (2 Cor. 11:25 – the beating with rods was a specifically Roman punishment), he did not *obey* them, nor, from his language elsewhere (1 Cor. 2:8; 6:1–8; 1 Thess. 5:3; Elliott 1994), did he think very much of them. Likewise the author of Acts of the Apostles depicts Roman rule to be both fair (Acts 25:12) and corrupt (Acts 24:25–6), capable of protecting the early Christians (Acts 27:43) and also of cruelly persecuting them (Acts 16:22). While interactions with the Jewish authorities are portrayed more consistently in a negative light (Mt 10:17; 23:34; Mk 13:9; Lk 12:11; 21:12; Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16.2; Acts 6:12ff.; 1 Cor. 12:24; Gal. 6:12; 1 Thess. 2:14; Rev. 2:9; 3:9) a number of positive depictions of Jewish leaders and institutions (Mk 5:22ff.; 15:43; Lk 2:22ff.; 24:53; John 19.39; Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:34; 6:7) make it clear that early Christian relationships with these were not always quite so hostile. Indeed difficulties in determining who actually constituted the 'authorities' within Jewish communities at this time and the extent to which the first churches considered themselves part of these communities, make this relationship a particularly difficult one to determine.

But, despite the diversity of different positions articulated in the New Testament nevertheless we can discern a unifying feature to all the interactions between Christians and the authorities of their day, whether imperial or Jewish. The new allegiance of Christians to Jesus and their new or transformed allegiance to God

relativized and qualified their former obligations to those in traditional positions of authority. As Acts informs us, Christians could be seen to be proclaiming a different king to Caesar (Acts 17:6–7; cf. Jn 19:12–15) and evidently believed themselves to be obeying ‘God rather than men’ (Acts 5:29).

Festivals and games

Religious festivals, whether Jewish or pagan, were central to the lives of inhabitants of the eastern Empire, wherever they lived (Sanders 1992; Beard 1998a; Price 1999) as were often closely associated leisure activities, whether Greek (athletics or the theatre) or more distinctively Roman (spectacles or the baths). Palestine was no exception in this respect (Gardiner 1930; Feldman 1993; Toner 1995; Weiss 1999). The part the first Christians played in these public, collective events is difficult to ascertain. However, given that at least some church members took part in regular Jewish and pagan worship (Lk 24:53; Acts 2:46; 3:1; 1 Cor. 10:21; Col. 2:16) it is probably the case that at least a few also participated in festivals in one way or another. A number may also have attended athletic competitions and spectacles. Indeed, athletics provided a rich source of similes and metaphors for early Christian authors (1 Cor. 9:24–7; Phil. 2:16; 3:13–14; Gal. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:8; Heb. 12:1; 1 Pet. 5:4; Pfitzner 1967) although, admittedly, such language had become commonplace by the first century. Attendance at the games may be rather more surprising



Figure 35.1 Seat from the theatre at Miletus. The inscription indicates that this section was reserved for Jews and/or proselytes. Photo Justin J. Meggitt.



Figure 35.2 The entrance of the synagogue at Sardis. Although from a later period, it demonstrates the public prominence of some Jewish communities in the Roman Empire.
Photo courtesy of Melanie Wright.

given the part they played in later Christian persecutions and the fact that they were not only extremely violent but regularly presented as re-enactments of pagan myths (as Christians were to become painfully aware when they found themselves starring in such charades before being martyred; Coleman 1990). Yet some Christians, even if a minority, probably watched such events in this early period, given what we can glean from later Christian writers (Tertullian, *On the Spectacles*) and the fact that we know that some Jews, who shared similar religious and moral objections to such activities, certainly did so at this time (see Claudius's letter to the Jews of Alexandria, CPJ 2, n. 153).

Commerce

Although the economies of the eastern Empire were rudimentary and largely unintegrated (Meggitt 1998), nonetheless markets and other collective forms of economic interaction were also a prominent feature of public life in the period. The degree of participation by Christians in these seems to have varied significantly. Some communities preserved teaching in which work was regarded as evidence of a lack of faith (Mt 6:25–33), and something that should be abandoned by those who responded to Jesus' call (Mk 1:19–20), while other churches seem to have had prominent members who played a full part in the economic life of their day and assumed that others should do likewise (1 Cor. 9:6; Eph. 4:28; Acts 16:14; 18:3; cf. Rev. 13:17).

However, all New Testament traditions, despite their considerable differences, make relative the importance of material possessions (Mt 6:19–21; Lk 12:13–21; 1 Tim. 6:10; Heb. 13:5), and consequently the importance of commercial interactions (1 Cor. 7:30–1; Jas 4:13–17). A few communities also radically critiqued economic behaviour of the time (Mk 10:17–31; and par.; Jas 5:1–6; Rev. 17–19:5), and initiated new models of economic interactions, rooted in the mutualism of the Christian gospel (Meggitt 1998; Swartley 1998).

None of the earliest Christian communities existed in literal seclusion from wider society, although psychologically many may have felt considerable distance from their non-Christian neighbours (e.g. Rev. 6:15; 19:18). Although the degree to which Christians interacted with those outside no doubt varied from location to location (Barclay 1992), and between different groups within churches, it seems that in day-to-day terms, early Christians continued to live within society, taking an active, if critical and sometimes limited, part in its public life in its various manifestations.

Social life: private

The household

A wide variety of ways of conceptualizing and defining the primary social unit existed in the world in which Christianity emerged, and it is important, as we have already noted, to stress that none coincides with modern notations of the family (see, e.g., Peskowitz 1993; Saller 1994). Indeed, it is largely misleading to use the term ‘family’ for this period. ‘Household’ is a more useful label to employ because, despite the significant differences between the cultures of the eastern Empire, the primary domestic unit was considered to consist not only of those individuals related to one another by descent, marriage or adoption but also others united by common residence and consumption. The near-universal practice of slavery, common to virtually every ethnic and economic group within the Empire (see, e.g., Martin 1993; Garnsey 1996; Meggitt 1998) was the major cause of this unusual feature of ancient domestic life. However, other categories of individuals were included within the primary social unit, in addition to slaves, such as hired workers, freed slaves, friends, lodgers and others.

Not all households were, by any means, the same. What evidence we have seems to point to a diversity of potential configurations, a consequence of a variety of factors including different ethnic, religious, economic and demographic influences. They could be as limited in size as one or two people (as we see in the Pseudo-Virgilian poem *Moretum*) or as extensive as the household of Herod the Great or a Roman emperor. Households could include families of one kind or another, whether nuclear, lone parent, extended, multiple or reconstituted (though it should be noted that the limitations of mortality and fertility meant that these could consist of only one or two generations; Bagnall and Frier 1994). But some did not (in the *Moretum* the household consists of one free and one enslaved person). Power could, at one extreme, be monopolized by a male patriarch, the oldest living male ascendent, such as the Roman *paterfamilias*, while at the other it was not unknown for a single autonomous woman to have fundamental authority within the unit (Lydia [Acts 16:15], Nympha

[Col. 4:15], Chloe [1 Cor. 1:11] and Mary [Mk 6:3] provide examples of this phenomenon) and there was also a myriad of variations in between.

This diversity, which appears to have been common throughout the Empire, has become clear from recent studies of documentary papyri and epigraphic sources. It has also become evident as we recognize the limitations on actual, as opposed to idealized, household forms imposed by such demographic variables as age at marriage, life expectancy and the prevalence of divorce, in addition to cultural, social and legal constraints (see Saller and Shaw 1984; Lewis 1989; Bagnall and Frier 1994; Martin 1996; Scheidel 1996).

Despite the almost bewildering array of permutations we can discern a couple of characteristics common to most households at the time. Popular literature and epigraphic sources for the period, both Greek, Roman and Jewish (see, e.g., Lattimore 1942; Horbury and Noy 1992; Noy 1993, 1995; Hansen 1998) indicate, perhaps unsurprisingly, that a male dominated most households, though his authority did not equate with that of the all-powerful patriarch, which was of such ideological significance for many elite authors in the Empire (Gaius, *Institutes* 1.55; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 2:26–7; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2. 199–208). They also, perhaps more surprisingly, show that kinship relationships, much beyond the most immediate, were of marginal consequence to most people (Garnsey and Saller 1987: 129). There was little real concern for clans, tribes or other broader associations based on kinship (genealogies were associated with only a small number of untypical individuals, and often fabricated *a posteriori* to legitimate their authority (as was probably the case with Jesus, e.g. Mt 1 and Lk 3). Instead the same limited number of household relationships preoccupied individuals in the early Empire: those between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves.

Given the significant interest in this triad of primary relationships in the household, which were also, as we shall see, of major concern to early Christians, these will be the focus of our study. But before we examine these in detail it is important to make some general remarks about the household in earliest Christianity, so that by concentrating on the parts, we do not overlook the unusual features of the whole.

The household in early Christianity

GENERAL REMARKS

There are significant differences within the New Testament over attitudes towards the primary social unit, as has been noted in a number of recent studies (e.g. Barton 1994; Carter 1994; Osiek and Balch 1997). On the one hand, the household is given a special place in early Christian life. Traditional household obligations were confirmed (see, e.g., the affirmation of the fifth commandment [Ex. 20:12 / Deut. 5:16] in Mk 7:10; 10:19 and par.) and careful attention is paid to its core relationships, as is particularly evident in the units of ethical parenesis termed ‘houselists’ (Eph. 5:22 – 6:9; Col. 3:18 – 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:18 – 3:7; cf. also 1 Tim. 2:8–15; 6:1–2; Tit. 2:1–10; *Didache* 4:9–11; *Barnabas* 19:5–7; 1 *Clem.* 21:6–9; Ignatius, *Pol.* 4:1 – 5:2; Polycarp, *Phil.* 4:2–3; Dunn 1996). Indeed, the traditional household was the

social unit from which the first churches were constructed and the primary means by which the new faith was transmitted (Rom. 16:10–11; 1 Cor. 1:16; 16:15, 19; Col. 4:15; 2 Tim. 1:16; 4:19; Philm; Acts 2:46; 5:42; cf. also Acts 10:24ff.; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8) and it is not unsurprising that the churches could even refer to themselves as the household of God (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:2–6; 1 Pet. 4:17), albeit following precedents in the Jewish Bible (e.g. Num. 12:7).

However, the significance of the conventional household was also made radically relative and some traditions even called for the destruction of its primary relationships (e.g. Mt 10:35–7; Lk 12:53; 14:26; cf. also Mt 19:29; Mk 10:29–30; Lk 18:29; Mt 8:22; Lk 9:60; Mt 10:21; Mk 13:12–13) and their replacement by relationships built solely upon common faith (Mt 12:46–50; Mk 3:31–5; Lk 8:19–21). Indeed, in Luke Christians are actually told to *hate* their families (14:26).

This hostility towards the household was not in itself distinctive at the time (e.g. Josephus, *War* 2.120–1; Barton 1997) and even some of the most negative language had its precedents (the demand to hate one's family echoes traditional calls to arms; Klassen 1999: 387). However, the justification provided by the early Christians for such behaviour, the primacy of allegiance to Jesus and the gospel over all other earthly ties (Mk 1:16–20; 2:13–14 and par.), was most certainly unique. The critique of the power of the leading male within the household, implicit in the vision, ascribed to Jesus, of a future in which fathers no longer had a role (Mk 10:29–30; cf. also Mt 23:9–10; Francis 1996), was also striking.

With these observations in mind, and while paying attention to the original contexts against which these domestic interactions were played out, let us now examine the major relationships within early Christian households.

WIFE AND HUSBAND

The relationship between a wife and a husband was understood very differently in various cultures in the early Empire (however one wishes to distinguish them). Nonetheless, as is clear from a host of evidence from the period, epigraphic, architectural, legal, literary and other, it was almost universally perceived to be an unequal one in which the wife was expected to be subordinate to the husband. However, the degree of inequality varied significantly in different cultures and classes. For example, most Roman wives had significantly more legal, social and financial autonomy than elite Greek wives, at least on mainland Greece, though rather less than most in Egypt (Henry 1989; Gardner 1991; Rowlandson 1998). The wife–husband relationship was also essentially a contractual relationship that was often viewed as provisional, even though the notion of a single partner throughout life became something of an ideal in the first century (Dixon 1992).

The emotional lives of the married are difficult to reconstruct in any epoch (Anderson 1980), particularly in such a poorly documented one, but there are enough literary and epigraphic remains, however formulaic, to demonstrate that mutual affection was not unusual or unexpected within marriage (see, e.g., Apuleius's *Apologia* or Pliny the Younger's remarks in his *Epistles* about his wife Calpurnia); indeed, if Veyne (1978) is correct it was becoming an increasingly common feature of such relationships in this period. There also seems to have been considerable congruence

in the qualities expected in a partner in different cultures within the Eastern Empire. For example, piety, fidelity, fecundity, self-sacrifice, and prudence are almost universally praised in the epitaphs of wives, Greek, Roman, Jewish or other, throughout the region (Lattimore 1942).

Although Jews had much in common with their neighbours when it came to their understanding of marriage, they were distinctive in a number of ways. They were, for example, unusual in the restrictions they placed on the permitted sexual activity of husbands (compare, e.g., Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.78, with Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.199) and their practice of endogamy (Deut. 7:3; Num. 25:1–9; Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.131–55). The fact that Jews at the time were only allowed to initiate divorce if they were male (following Deut 24:1–4) was also distinctive (women could, e.g., initiate divorce under Roman law) as was their practice of polygamy, which seems to have continued to be practised by at least some Jews in this period, and not just untypical individuals such as Herod the Great (Josephus, *War* 1.477ff.; Kokkinos 1998), as has become clear from the recently published second-century Babatha archives (Lewis et al. 1989). (Being a wife in such a polygamous marriage did not necessarily cause a woman to lose all economic or social power. Babatha was a second wife in a polygamous second marriage but seems to have exercised considerable economic independence, loaning money, in her own right, to her new husband.)

Against this background relationships between spouses in the first churches appear unusual in a number of ways. Perhaps most obviously, the hostility to divorce, a feature of the ethical praxis of most early churches (Mt 5:31–2; 19:3–9; Mk 10:2–12; Lk 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10–11), was striking in the context of the first century. This took two slightly different forms in the earliest material (although both replace the biblical law of divorce (Deut. 24:1–4) with an argument for monogamy based on the depiction of marriage in Genesis 2:24 (Keener 1991)). In the Markan form (Mk 10:2–12, which also seems to be found in Lk 16:18 and 1 Cor. 7:10–11) divorce is not allowed under any circumstances (an unusual position in the context of the day, though not completely unparalleled). While in Matthew divorce is allowed but solely on the grounds of the wife's adultery (Mt 5:32; 19:3–9) and remarriage is prohibited (divorced men were to become 'eunuchs for the kingdom', Mt 19:12). Although both forms are not unparalleled in literature of the time (the former resembles the position found in some Qumran literature, 11Q 19 and CD 4.20–1, the latter that ascribed to the rabbi Shammai) this would have appeared a very distinctive position for the churches to hold. Paul's addition to the tradition he received in this area, allowing divorce but only if it is instigated by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:12–16), or perhaps a believing wife (1 Cor. 7:11a) as long as she did not seek to have a subsequent marriage until the death of the first partner (1 Cor. 7:39), would have done little to diminish this.

The practice of endogamy, only entering into marriage with other believers (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1), and the limitation of permissible sexual activity to marriage (1 Cor. 7:2–9, 36–8; 1 Thess. 4:3–8; Heb. 13:4; cf. 1 Cor. 6:12–20), were rather less unusual and had clear parallels in mainstream Judaism, although to gentiles they would have appeared somewhat strange. Monogamy (1 Tim. 3:2, 12) would have appeared less so as it was the norm within the Empire. The fact that

Christianity encouraged affection between spouses (Eph. 5:33) was not, as is clear from the above, an innovation; it was unusual in the justification given for such sentiments (the work and experience of Christ, e.g. Eph. 5:21–33) and in its mutual quality, at least in the earliest period (something particularly evident in 1 Cor. 7), which is unprecedented in the extent to which it addresses both partners in the marriage relationship and gives them the same obligations.

As with all the core relationships in the household, the bond between the married couple was also made radically relative in early Christian communities. Indeed, it could be discouraged in some, though such hostility was not predicated upon a negative view of sexual relations in this early period but was maintained for more pragmatic reasons: the need to attend to the concerns of a spouse, it was argued, could distract a believer from wholehearted service to the gospel (1 Cor. 7: 32–4; though cf. 1 Tim. 5:14). The possibility of opting out of marriage could present an attractive opportunity to many church members, particularly women, for whom marriage often resulted in the loss of a significant degree of autonomy, as can be seen, for example, in later apocryphal traditions such as the popular *Acts of Paul and Thecla*.

CHILD AND PARENT

There was significant diversity in the relationship between children and parents in the Roman Empire during this period. There was also considerable paradox. For example, Romans, Greeks and most other inhabitants of the eastern Empire practised exposure, infanticide and abortion as a means of limiting family size (see esp. Harris 1982, 1994). Jews were almost unique in not doing this (Tacitus, *Histories* 5.5, Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.202; Ex. 21:22–5; cf. also Diodorus Siculus 1.80). Such acts were carried out with a casualness and callousness that is at times chilling (e.g. a romantic letter includes the following admonition to a wife from a husband: 'If you chance to bear a child, and it is a boy, let it be; if it is a girl, cast it out' [POxy 4.744]). For those who were lucky enough to survive infancy, a significant degree of violence accompanied their rearing, whatever their status, meted out by parents, guardians, owners or their representatives. Offspring in antiquity were understood as inferiors in a strongly authoritarian, and often brutal, relationship (Shaw 1987) in which adults sought to tame children. In modern Western societies, which understand 'childhood' as a distinct, vulnerable stage in the psychological and social development of a human being (a recent perspective, Kleijwegt 1991), such behaviour is shocking and difficult to comprehend. It is all the more bewildering when it is observed that many parents and children nonetheless forged relationships characterized by deep affection (Hallett 1984; Golden 1988; Currie 1993).

The early Christians, despite affirming traditional, autocratic relationships between parents and children (Mk 7:10; 10.17 and par; 14.36; Rom. 1:30; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20; 2 Tim. 3:2; Heb. 5:8; 12:9), gave a new status to children, including them, along with other powerless groups in society, such as the sick and the poor, at the centre of the new faith. This unusual concern probably originated with the historical Jesus whose interest in children was obviously considered striking by his contemporaries (Mt 19:13–15; Mk 10:13–16; Lk 18: 15–17) but also appears to

have been sustained in later traditions. For example, rather surprisingly, children are included in the ethical advice found in Colossians 3:20 and Ephesians 6:1–4, where they are valued as active moral agents and the parent–child relationship itself is perceived as one of mutual submission. It is also evident in the wide use made of similes, metaphors and forms of address drawn from the world of childhood in early Christian literature (Mt 7:9–11; 11:16–19, 25; 18:1–7; 19:13–15; Mk 9:33–7, 42; 10:13–16; Lk 7:31–5; 9:46–8; 11:11–13; 17:1–2; 18:15–17; Jn 1:12; 12:26; 13:33; Rom. 8:12–19; 9:7–8; 26–7; 1 Cor. 3:1; 4:14; 13:11; 14:20; 2 Cor. 12:14; Gal. 4:7, 19; 1 Thess. 2:11; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Philm 10; Heb. 12:7–8; 1 Jn 2:1, 18, 28; 3:7, 18, 5:1, 21). The fact that, like Jews, the early Christians objected to exposure, infanticide and abortion (*Didache* 2.2; *Barnabas* 19.5; *To Diognetus* 5.6; Justin, *Apology* 1:27–9; Boswell 1988) may also indicate this special status, as might the practice of infant baptism (Wiedemann 1989; cf. also Eyben 1993), although this is almost certainly a later development.

But while the new status afforded to children in some early communities is undeniable, in later New Testament literature it is noticeable by its absence. Parent–child relations, for example, do not merit inclusion in the houselist found in Titus 2:1–10, and elsewhere in the pastoral epistles children only appear as objects of parental control and are no longer addressed in their own right (1 Tim. 3:4, 12; Tit. 1:6). As Strange accurately remarks, ‘After Colossians and Ephesians, children were occasionally spoken about, but never to’ (Strange 1996: 7). Nor did Christianity lead to any noticeable changes in the method of child-rearing (corporal punishment remained an accepted feature of Christian parenting; Heb. 12:7; *Didache* 4.9; *Barnabas* 19.5) and there is no evidence, despite some recent claims to the contrary (Stark 1996), that the new faith led to increased numbers of children in the early communities, as one might expect. It is also important to bear in mind that even in the earliest strata of Christian tradition, the child–parent bond was not always understood as a positive thing. It could also be depicted as negative, as a hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel (Lk 14:26), something perhaps evident in Jesus’ own rather ambiguous relationship with his own mother (Mk 3:21 and par.).

SLAVE AND MASTER

Although we have little evidence from the point of view of slaves or ex-slaves in the Empire in this period (with notable exceptions such as the *Life of Aesop* or the writings of Epictetus), and so our knowledge of relationships between slaves and their owners is unavoidably one-sided, we can sketch a few of their general characteristics. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as something predicated upon the legal ownership of one person by another, slave–master relationships were typified by abuse of a physical, sexual, social and psychological kind (Bradley 1984, 1994). While some slaves in the Roman Empire could achieve significant autonomy, and even establish households of their own (indeed, they could even own other slaves), the experiences of the few should not distract us from the misery of the many: the most slaves could reasonably hope for was that the owner would provide them with at least the necessities of food, clothing and shelter required to remain a functioning part of the household and, if they were fortunate enough, the opportunity to be manumitted in a good

enough physical condition that they could provide for themselves (elderly or sick slaves were often freed to starve). Although some of the famished free poor might sell themselves into servitude to secure food at times of crisis (Ramin and Veyne 1981) or to raise capital to help others (1 *Clem.* 55.2), the situation seems to have been barely tolerable for most, and a significant minority sought release through flight, suicide or murder when the opportunity arose (see Augustus, *Res Gestae* 25) and small-scale acts of resistance and insubordination (of which Aesop was the fictional slave hero *par excellence*) remained a common feature of slave behaviour. Although a few, such as Philo (*Special Laws* 3.137–43) censured its excesses, none subjected the institution of slavery to any sustained critique (Garnsey 1996), and virtually none, except the Jewish sectarian Essenes and Therapeutae, believed it should not exist at all.

The slave–master relationship was, however, significantly altered within the first churches, both in a positive and negative manner. At least among the earliest communities it was expected to be functionally, if not officially, at an end between fellow Christians, who were expected to forge a new relationship characterized by equality and mutual submission (official manumission was something tightly restricted in the early Empire, and probably not an option in most cases). This is most clear from Paul's letter to Philemon (if it is, as is traditionally thought, a letter concerning a runaway slave, something recently unconvincingly contested; see Barclay 1991; Nordling 1991; Callahan 1997). In this the apostle makes it clear that he considers the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus to be completely transformed, physically as well as spiritually, by virtue of their common faith. The master and slave are now brothers 'in the flesh and in the Lord' (Phlm 16), an idea which echoes that found in the egalitarian baptismal formulas of the Pauline churches (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). The early houselists similarly depict the relationship between the Christian owner and slave as fundamentally different from that found in the outside world, as one of reciprocal submission and mutual concern (Eph. 5:21; 6:5–9; Col. 3:22 – 4:1), although these also include an additional innovation in dignifying the enslaved person as a moral agent within the relationship (the later list found in 1 Pet. 2:18–25 addresses enslaved Christians but says nothing of the responsibilities of masters, and appears to justify a far more conservative, one-sided, ethic; cf. also Tit. 2:9–10). However, there was obviously some tension about how practically this relationship should be transformed, and it is clear, at least in some of the later literature, that the expectations of some Christian slaves were not met (1 Tim. 6:1–2).

However, the effect of the new faith appears to have been less positive where a slave was a Christian and the owner was not, and consequently self-sacrifice was not reciprocated (not all Christians lived in Christian households: 1 Cor. 7:12–16; 1 Pet. 3:1–2). Slaves became an active, diligent agent in their own suffering, with no visible, this-worldly, compensation, even if the suffering was given a theological significance, which it had not had before (1 Pet. 2:20–1). Indeed, early Christian teaching could have the consequence (even if this was not the intention) of reinforcing and legitimizing the institution of slavery in a way not previously seen in antiquity (Bradley 1994: 145–53; de Ste Croix 1975) as the subsequent history of the application of these texts indicates.

But all traditions of Christianity in the New Testament, however radical or conservative, had one tangible effect on the master–slave relationship, perhaps too easily overlooked but that, at least for many of those enslaved in non-Jewish households, would have, if implemented, led to one significant change in the experience of slaves: early Christian concern to limit sexual activity to marriage meant that a slave was no longer the sexual property of the owner, and no longer exposed to the sexual abuse that so often accompanied this.

THE CHURCH

The social relationships that operated when believers assembled as a church (1 Cor. 11:18) have been the subject of much study in recent decades (publications in this area have been legion but notable among them are Theissen 1982; Meeks 1983; Schüssler Fiorenza 1983; MacDonald 1988; Horrell 1996). In particular, scholarship has been interested in two aspects of these. On the one hand the processes of routinization, institutionalization and legitimization have attracted considerable attention. How, for example, did authority become associated with offices rather than specific individuals (Acts 6:1–6; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:1–13) and what were the consequences of this for the position of women within the communities (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983; MacDonald 1988; Wire 1990)? Secondly, studies have tried to discern the extent to which conflicts in the first churches were primarily social in their origins. What role, for instance, did different religious or class-based perceptions of appropriate forms of social behaviour play in these disagreements?

Such work has been instructive. For example, disputes over the consumption of food, which appear regularly in early Christian literature (e.g. Acts 10:1 – 11:18; 15:1–35; 15:20, 29; 21:25; Rom. 14:1–23; 1 Cor. 5:11, 8–11; Gal. 2:11–14; Rev. 2:14, 20), and that are not just concerned with *what* one should eat but *with whom* one should eat, provide evidence that social factors were undeniably important in some arguments that divided believers. (Jesus' innovative behaviour in this area probably lay behind some of these later difficulties: see, e.g., Mt 9:10–13; 11:19; Mk 2:15–17; Lk 5:29–33; 7:34; Crossan 1991.) Nevertheless, such scholarship has also had significant faults. It is impossible, for instance, to describe structural developments of any kind in formative Christianity because we know so little for certain about the relationships between the documents and traditions that constitute the New Testament (although, in broad terms, increasing institutionalization over time appears to be undeniable). In noting the social origins of conflicts between Christians studies have also exaggerated the part played by alleged absolute socio-economic differences, such as those between the 'strong' and the 'weak' of Corinth (Theissen 1982). These differences, especially when viewed against the non-elite context of the day, appear rather less than certain (Meggitt 1998). Too much has also been made of a small number of social practices and conventions erroneously assumed to be universal and widespread at the time. Patronage provides a good example of this. Far from this social practice having a significant explanatory role to play in understanding tensions within some of the first churches (e.g. Chow 1992; Clarke 1993) it actually had little significance within the world in which the early Christians lived, barely affecting the lives of the non-elite in the eastern Empire at all (it is

only explicitly referred to once in the entire New Testament – Rom. 16:1–2; though cf. also Lk 22:25).

But perhaps the biggest problem with current scholarship is that its preoccupations have led us to underestimate the distinctive social character of the first churches, something visible in a mass of telling but incidental detail common to all early Christian traditions. Although to some degree these communities resembled pre-existing social forms, such as the household, synagogue, club or philosophical school (Meeks 1983; Ascough 1998), they also constituted a radical departure from what had gone before, creating an environment in which unprecedented forms of social interaction took place.

For example, within the first churches members of diverse gender, status and ethnic groups (women and men; slaves, the freed and the free; Jews, Greeks, Romans, Samaritans, Syrians and others) created relationships unparalleled in the period. Although we can discern that this was the case from various key descriptive and programmatic statements about the constitution of the churches (such as the 'baptismal' formulas; e.g. 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; or the evangelistic commissions found in Mt 24:14; 28:19; Mk 13:10), it is only by close analysis of indirect data, such as the list of individuals found in the concluding section of Paul's letter to the Romans (Lampe 1991), that we can confirm this picture and see their variegated form more clearly. It is through analysis of such apparently peripheral material that we discover, for example, the crucial role played in the early communities by such prominent women as Phoebe or Junia (Rom. 16:1–2, 7; cf. 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:12–15). Only the initial Jerusalem church appears to have been somewhat less heterogeneous, and represents a partial exception to this picture, though even this was, if Acts is accurate, composed of a diverse, cosmopolitan group of Jews (Acts 2:1–47; 6:1–6; 15:5).

The members were bound together in a web of mutual obligations that, again, were highly unusual. These were expressed in a variety of ways, but perhaps most visibly in an ethic of interdependence that saturated early Christian literature – what Lohfink (1985) terms a 'praxis of togetherness', in which concern, indeed love, for 'one another' was its dominant, consistent hallmark (e.g. Jn 13:34–5; 15:12, 17; Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 16:16; 1 Cor. 11:33; 12:25; Gal. 5:13; 6:2; Eph. 4:2, 32; 5:21; Col. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:15; 2 Thess. 1:3; Jas 5:16; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:9; 5:5; 1 Jn 1:7; 3:11). This expressed itself more specifically in new patterns of commensality (Lk 14:12–14; Acts 2:46; Gal. 2:11–14), hospitality (Mk 6:8–11; Acts 16:15; 18:3; Rom. 12:13; 2 Jn 10), economic activity (Acts 2:44–5; 4:34–5; Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8–9; Gal. 2:10), authority (Mk 10:42–5; Mt 23:8; 2 Cor. 1:24; 4:10–12), care for the socially and materially powerless (Acts 6:1; 9:36–43; 1 Tim. 5:3–16) and in a general concern for the mutual upbuilding of the community (1 Cor. 14:26; 1 Thess. 5:11). These new relationships were regarded as having precedence over those already established, and reshaping the norms of social interaction between believers (e.g. 1 Cor. 6:1–8). They were thought to result from a shared experience and identity that ultimately owed itself to the activity and authority of Jesus (through, e.g., the presence of the Spirit-Acts 2:17–19; Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 12–14; Jn 14–16; etc.), although they were also enforced by the churches themselves (Mt 16:17; 18:15; 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 6:1–8; Gal. 6:1) and ultimately, of course, by God (1 Cor. 11:27–32; Acts 4:33 – 5:11).

It is no surprise that the strong, mutual relationships between Christians were both a source of pride for early apologists (Aristides, *Apology*, 15) and ridiculed by the first critics of the new faith (Lucian, *Peregrinus* 13).

But as well as being tightly bound together, not only by distinctive praxis but by such things as participation in common rites, knowledge of common central myths and the use of emotive terms to describe believers and non-believers, such as those associated with kinship and purity (e.g. Rom. 1:7, 13; 7:1; 10:1; 12:1; 15:25, 26; 16:2, 15; etc.), most communities also remained open to those outside. They clearly believed that they had responsibilities towards those not in their churches, primarily of an ethical and evangelistic kind (Mt 5:44; 19:19; 22:39; 28:19; Mk 12:31 [16:15]; Lk 6:27–8; 24:47; Rom. 12:17–21; 3:9; 15:15, 1 Cor. 19:19–24; Gal. 6:9–10; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9). Although they considered themselves contrast societies (Lohfink 1985), in critical opposition to the world about them and its values (Mt 5:14; Phil. 2:14–15), they continued to interact with their neighbours. Even the gospel of John, so often interpreted as the work of an anti-social community, withdrawn into itself as a result of persecution (Jn 9:22 and 16:2), was produced by a church in active dialogue with various groups outside its fold (Rensberger 1988).

CONCLUSIONS

As observed at the outset, a diversity of problems, of both method and data, make the business of describing the social life of the first churches a particularly difficult undertaking and one that has spawned a plurality of different reconstructions. My sketch, like all others by students of this field, must remain partial and provisional. Although it cannot be otherwise as the difficulties are so intractable, nonetheless, until scholars take seriously the popular cultures of the early Empire within which early Christianity arose, all work in this area will remain vulnerable to criticism, even at the most fundamental level.

Despite the provisional nature of these findings, it seems likely that two characteristics of early Christian social life, which have surfaced a number of times in this analysis, will be enduring features of any future descriptions. Firstly, early Christian social life was clearly one of considerable diversity. However one views the evidence, it seems that some churches did not share the same ideas about such social issues as, for example, the treatment of children, or the institution of slavery. Striking innovations among some communities appear to be unknown, forgotten or perhaps repressed in others. Conversely, early Christian social life also possessed a surprising degree of uniformity, too readily overlooked. It is especially evident in the way that all the traditions seem to assume that pre-existing social relationships of whatever kind were fundamentally reconfigured and made relative by the new allegiance and experience of Christ. But it can also be seen in the common expectation that interactions between members of the communities founded in his name were to have a discernible, distinctive quality characterized by mutual concern and interdependence. While we shall undoubtedly learn a great deal more about the social life of the first churches in the near future, as considerable scholarly energy continues to be expended on its study, these two general features, diversity and uniformity, will remain key in any future constructions.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

THE FIRST CHURCHES

Religious practice



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PROBLEMS

In order to examine the religious practices of the early Christians a number of problems need to be addressed from the outset. This is necessary if we are to avoid constructing a picture that is nothing more than an articulation of our presuppositions or, indeed, for some of us, our own practices.

The first and most obvious difficulty we face is one posed by the nature of the evidence itself: none of the writings contained in the New Testament were composed in order to give a detailed record of what took place when the first believers came together to worship. In fact, the New Testament gives us frustratingly little information about this aspect of their lives. It tells us nothing about many important practices (e.g. what rites, if any, accompanied early Christian weddings?) and what sparse information it gives us about others is often baffling (what, e.g., was the 'baptism on behalf of the dead' to which Paul refers in 1 Cor. 15:29 and which is not mentioned elsewhere?). The closest we have to a description of early Christian worship in the New Testament is found in 1 Corinthians 11–14, and any study must make a great deal of use of this material, but it comes from a highly polemical letter in which Paul is preoccupied with certain practices that had become problematic among the Corinthians, and consequently it gives us little information about those that had not. Early sources from outside the New Testament, such as the *Didache*, Justin Martyr's *First Apology* (especially 61–7), the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and Pliny the Younger's *Letter to Trajan* (10:96) can give us some help but are of only limited value: we cannot be certain how well they reflect the behaviour of the New Testament churches, a few of which flourished nearly a century before some of these writings were composed.

The problems involved in making sense of what little pertinent evidence we have are compounded by a series of errors common to much scholarship in this area. Many studies have, for example, fallen victim to what can be called *panliturgicalism*, a failing that consists of seeing fragments of early liturgy buried throughout the New Testament (Moule 1961). In fact, few such fragments can be confidently distinguished by any agreed criteria. Others have imposed a uniformity on the evidence that it does not *a priori* possess (it is not, for instance, obvious that all references to

baptism are to a ritual involving water nor that the rites practised in Corinth were practised in the same way, if at all, in other early churches, such as those of Rome or Jerusalem). A number have unthinkingly interpreted the evidence using evolutionary models, and have assumed, for example, that the religious practices of the earliest churches became more complex over time. This may be right but is not necessarily so. A considerable body of studies has displayed symptoms of *parallelomania* (Sandmel 1962) and has drawn unwarranted conclusions about the relationship between various Christian and non-Christian practices on the basis of alleged resemblances of one kind or another (resemblances that often turn out to exist only in the eye of the beholder). There has also been a widespread tendency to focus upon practices that have been capable of liturgical formulation, and consequently have had an afterlife in the church (e.g. the Lord's Supper) to the exclusion of others, which have played little part in formal Christian worship throughout the last two millennia of its history (e.g. glossolalia).

Nor, of course, is it self-evident what practices can be accurately labelled 'religious', given that the idea of 'religion' held by most moderns is quite different from that of inhabitants of the first century. Although there were significant differences between the various cultures from which the first Christians were drawn, 'religion' was conceived of as something embedded in most areas of human life, not the discrete and autonomous phenomenon it is often characterized as today. As a result we must be careful not to limit our analysis to those activities that seem to us to be clearly 'religious', such as the rituals associated with the Lord's Supper or water baptism, and omit or downplay those that do not (such as the holy kiss or the collection for the Jerusalem congregation).

We must also be wary of recent, functionalist readings of specific worship practices that claim to explain their role in the social construction of the formative communities. Different practices undoubtedly helped to create and maintain new identities, solidarities, and even shared cosmologies, among the first Christians, and it might even be useful, as some have argued, to make distinctions between, for example, irregular rituals of transformation and regular ceremonies of consolidation in explaining how they did this (Neyrey 1990; Horrell 1999). But, while some general remarks in this area are valid, we must be careful of pushing the evidence too far and of too quickly providing neat, functionalist readings, that seem all the more compelling with the benefit of hindsight, of specific practices that, in this early phase of Christian history, were inchoate and had not yet become the highly stylized, formalized activities they were to become (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 11:17–34). Indeed, it is quite possible that many of the rites were not even as significant (1 Cor. 1:14–17) for the original practitioners as they are for their modern interpreters and so it is all the more dangerous to make too much of their role in this respect.

But perhaps the largest problem we face in examining the religious practices of the first Christians is the most difficult to resolve: how can we do justice to the fact that they were not originally understood in isolation from each other, nor, more importantly, from the wider religious experience of the individuals and communities. How, as it were, can we see the wood for the trees? This may seem an obvious point to make but it has been a missing dimension in New Testament studies, as Luke T. Johnson (1997) has recently observed. If we concentrate solely on categorizing or

describing what the early Christians *did* and not what they *meant* by what they did, we run the risk of misunderstanding their worship life completely. The analogy made famous by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle is perhaps the best way to emphasize the significance of this: a twitch and a wink can appear identical but they are not: the meanings underlying both are completely different (Pals 1996). It is difficult to uncover these meanings and perhaps the best we can do is try to describe the dominant recurring motifs present in the descriptions of worship we are given; but we should be conscious that the ideas and experiences embodied in these practices, and not their form, should be the focus of any serious attempt to understand this aspect of early Christian life.

PRACTICES

Before we begin to look at religious practices undertaken by members of the first churches that were distinctively 'Christian' it is important, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding, to look at those that were not: to examine the specifically Jewish and pagan practices within the first communities.

Jewish and pagan practices of the first Christians

It is quite clear that members of the first churches continued to participate in the religious lives of other groups, both Jewish and pagan, in addition to their own. We know for example, at least according to Luke–Acts, that many remained observant Jews, attending synagogues and the temple in Jerusalem (Lk 24:53; Acts 2:46; 3:1; Acts 18:26; 21:26; 22:17; Barrett 1991), and that they did not do so entirely for polemical or evangelistic reasons (though some may have; e.g. Paul in Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; etc.). In the earliest period Christians seem to have been indistinguishable from Jews (Acts 18:2; 18:15; Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* 25.4). This should not come as a surprise. Despite the clear antagonism between the two groups in some New Testament writings (e.g. Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16:2; Gal. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:14) the thoroughgoing separation of the two religions did not occur in the period they cover. Indeed, it took some time for 'Christians' to acquire a separate identity (the term 'Christian' is a late invention and is only used three times in the New Testament – Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). The diffuse nature of authority in Judaism, particularly before the revolt of Bar Kochba (132–5 CE), and its stress upon right action rather than right belief, meant that many Christians who were also Jews could be expected to be left largely untroubled if they did not abandon central Jewish practices, such as dietary laws and circumcision. The ability to sustain such a dual identity was problematic and by the second century proved largely impossible (*Epistle of Barnabas* 4.13–14; Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 16.4; 93.4; 95.4) but at least in this early period, it remained, to a greater or lesser extent, a real possibility for some.

We also know that some members continued to take part in the religious practices of paganism, even though this was regarded as scandalous by others, notably Paul (1 Cor. 10:21: 'You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons'). Again, this is unsurprising as pagan religiosity, in its numerous forms, saturated the public

and private lives of individuals within the Empire (Beard et al. 1998a, 1998b), and its essentially tolerant nature (Garnsey 1984) meant that becoming a Christian did not, at least from a pagan point of view, preclude a person from taking some part in its worship.

It is difficult to ascertain the meaning that these practices, Jewish and pagan, possessed for the members of the earliest churches who continued to observe them (or even perhaps adopted them; Gal. 6:12), but it is obvious that, at least for some, they were of far from marginal significance and cannot be ignored.

Christian practices

Context

Before we detail the specific practices of the communities, it is important to recognize the contexts in which they took place. The primary place at which worship was undertaken was at gatherings at which all the members of the church came together (1 Cor. 14:23, 26), most probably held on the first day of the week (Sunday) (1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 20:7; Justin, *Apology* 1.67.7) and most often in private dwellings of one kind or another (Acts 2:46; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19). In later centuries, as churches grew in size and attracted individuals of a higher social status, large domestic structures were adapted for congregations (White 1996, 1997) but it seems probable that, in the New Testament period, Christian worship normally took place in more modest locations, such as the rented rooms, workshops, or lean-tos, that were 'home' for most people in the first century (Jewett 1993; Meggitt 1998). Given the public nature of a great deal of what we would now think of as 'private' space it is no surprise that the meetings seem to have been open, with unbelievers having access to the proceedings (1 Cor. 14:23).

In the earliest period the worship lacked any formal leadership or structure, with all members, men and women, participating in different ways, and the different practices being undertaken in any order (1 Cor. 14:26). At times, it appears to have been rather anarchic (1 Cor. 14:40). However, later New Testament writings provide evidence that distinct offices emerged in the church (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3) and that worship became noticeably more structured. These offices became occupied solely by men (1 Tim. 3), and the participation of women appears to have become restricted (contrast 1 Cor. 11:5 and 1 Tim. 2:11–15), although this correlation between the growth in authority structures and the marginalization of the role of women in worship is by no means certain (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 14:34–5 and Rom. 16:1–2; Schüssler Fiorenza 1996).

General practices

PRAYER

Prayer was obviously central to the life of the first churches and their individual members (Mt 6:6; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4; 12:5; Rom. 12:12; 1 Cor. 7:5; Col. 4:2; Cullmann 1995). Prayers could be of various kinds: thanksgiving (Lk 2:38; Col. 4:2;

Heb. 13:15; Rev. 11:17–18); benediction (Lk 1:68; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3); and petition (e.g. Mt 6:11; Lk 11:3), particularly intercessory petition (e.g. Mt 5:44; Jn 17:9; 2 Cor. 1:11; 4:3; Jas 5:16; Wiles 1974). They could be both extempore (Acts 4:24ff.) or prescribed (*Didache* 8.3, e.g., requires that the Lord's Prayer be said three times a day).

Early Christians mostly prayed out loud, following the practice of their contemporaries (van der Horst 1994), although inaudible prayer was not unknown in the period (e.g. Seneca, *Letters* 10.5; Philo, *Special Laws* 1.272) and there is evidence that

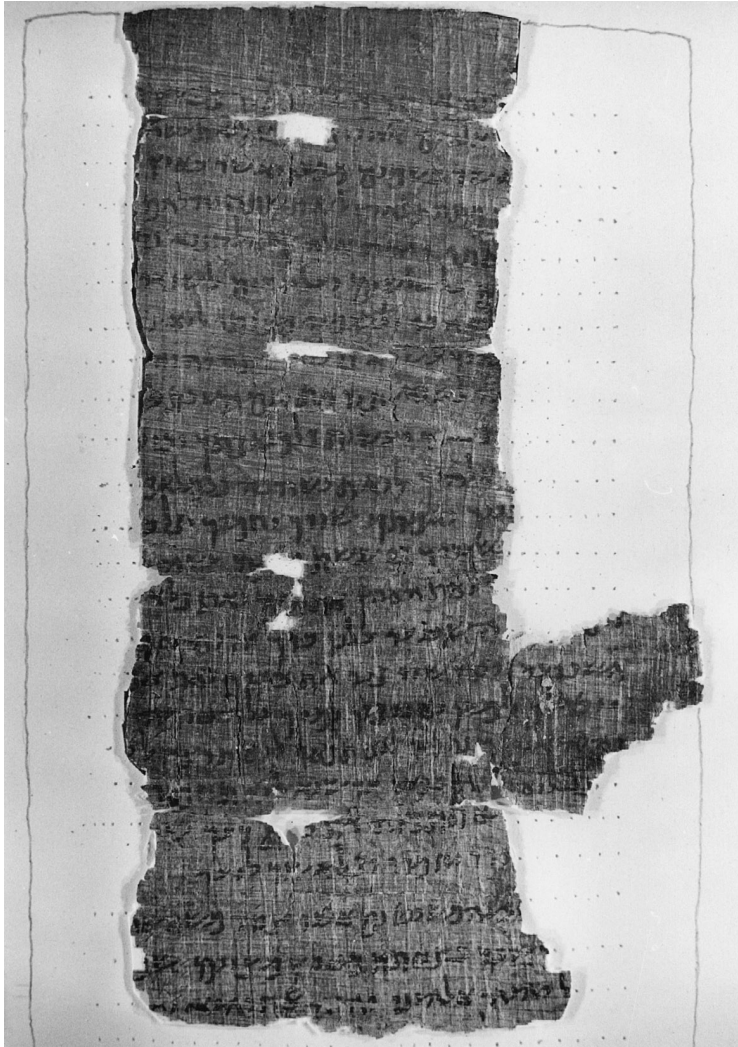


Figure 36.1 The Nash Papyrus. A second century BCE liturgical fragment containing the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4–5) and the Decalogue. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

some Christians prayed silently on occasion (1 Thess. 5:17). The posture for prayer seems to have varied. Prayers could be delivered standing, kneeling, and even prostrate (Mt 26:39; Mk 11:25; 14:35; Lk 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5; Eph. 3:14; Rev. 4:10; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4, 10; 22:9).

The form and, to a large extent, the character of Christian prayer would have been familiar to Jews and others (Kiley 1997). Prayer was, for example, a significant component in Jewish worship in the Temple and elsewhere (the *Shema* of Deut. 6:4–5, was probably said by most observant Jews twice a day; Sanders 1992). Indeed, it seems to have become more important with the emergence of synagogues and prayer halls just prior to the birth of the new religion (Falk 1995). However, Christianity was unusual in the way that prayer emerged as a partial replacement for sacrifice (Tertullian, *On Prayer* 27–8), something not unknown among Jewish sectarians before the destruction of the temple in 70 CE but not true for Judaism as a whole until after this date (Chazon and Bernstein 1997).

More striking, however, was the place given to Jesus, a man, in whose name Christian prayers were spoken and who functioned as the intermediary through whom prayers to God were made (Jn 14:13f.; 15:16; 16:24, 26; Rom. 1:8; 7:25; Heb. 13:21; Jude 1:25). Even more unusually, Jesus could at times be not just the mediator but also the object of such prayers (Jn 14:13; Acts 7:59). Jesus' position as the exemplar, *par excellence*, of prayer (Mt 6:9; Lk 11:2) was also, of course, unique, as was the model prayer ascribed to him (Mt 6:9–13; Lk 11:1–4) despite evident parallels with various Jewish traditions of the time (Davies and Allison 1988).

The place of the Spirit as enabler of Christian prayers and intercessor (Rom. 8:26; 1 Cor. 14:14; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20) was also innovative. However, some Jews believed in angelic intercessors (Job 33:23–8; Tob. 12:15; 1 *Enoch* 9.3; 15.2; 99.3; 104.1; *T. Levi* 3.5; 5.6–7; *T. Dan.* 6.2) and could view angels and spirits as virtually synonymous (1 *Enoch* 15.4, 7; *Jub.* 1.25; 1 QH 1.11) so it probably is best not to see this aspect of Christian prayer as completely unprecedented.

SINGING

Singing was a prominent feature of worship in many, if not all, the early communities (1 Cor. 14:15, 26; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Jas 5:13; Acts 16:25; Pliny, *Letter to Trajan* 10.96.7) and had probably been an aspect of the devotional life of the Jesus movement from the outset (Mk 14:26; Mt 26:30).

Although we do not possess any early Christian hymns, it seems likely, on stylistic and linguistic grounds (see. e.g., Stauffer 1955; Barth 1974) that some hymnic material can be discerned in the New Testament. (The most probable fragments are Lk 1:46–55 [the Magnificat]; 1:67–79 [the Benedictus]; 2:29–32 [Nunc Dimittis]; Jn 1:1–18; Eph. 2:14–16; Phil. 2:6–11; Col. 1:15–20; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:3–4; 1 Pet. 3:18–22; and Rev. 5:9–14). It is also likely that some Christian singing was extempore as this is the best explanation for the distinction made in the New Testament between psalms, hymns and 'spiritual songs' (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; cf. 1 Cor. 14:15). As a consequence, much of it is now irretrievably lost to us.

Of course there was nothing unusual in the place given to singing by Christians. Nor, as far as we can tell, in the forms that it took. Psalms and hymns were a feature

of Jewish worship, both in the temple and in other settings (e.g. the *Hymns Scroll* of Qumran; Phil, *On the Contemplative Life* 80; *T. Job* 14; Falk 1995) and pagans too used singing as part of their religious devotions (Bremmer 1981). However, one distinctive element of Christian behaviour, at least for non-Jews, would be the fact that singing appears not to have been accompanied by dancing, a staple of most forms of pagan worship, and in particular the types of piety associated with mystery cults such as Cybele, Isis and Atargatis (Apuleius, *Golden Ass* 8.27).

The content of the songs also appears to have been distinctive in one obvious way. As with the prayers, the prominence given to Jesus and the soteriological narrative of his pre-existence, descent, life, death and exaltation, was, of course, unique, as was the emphasis on its implications for the present and future experience of the believer. Although this seems to have developed from the use by early Christians of certain scriptural psalms that lent themselves to Christological interpretation (such as 2, 8, 22, 110, 118) in combination with, among other things, the speculations about Wisdom found in Proverbs 8, Sirach 24, Wisdom 2–5 (Karris 1996), it was, nonetheless, an original and unusual development.

READING

It is likely that the Jewish scriptures were regularly read as part of the public worship life of the earliest churches (1 Tim. 4:13). The programmatic statement found in 2 Timothy 3:16 ('All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness') is indicative of its central significance and authority in the lives of the first congregations, and the quotations and allusions present throughout the New Testament confirm this. But as there is no clear reference to the public reading of the Jewish scriptures by Christians until the middle of the second century (Justin, *Apology* 1.67.3) we should perhaps be wary of assuming that this was definitely the case. It is unlikely that scripture reading played much of a direct role in private worship life given the high cost of book and scroll ownership in the Empire (Fantham 1996; though see Acts 8:28). Some may have been able to access collections of scripture excerpts (testimonia) but evidence for these is scanty for this early period (see 4 QTestimonia for a possible example from Qumran).

In addition to scripture, letters written by leaders of the churches were also read (Acts 15:31; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; 2 Pet. 3:16; Rev 1:3). Indeed, it is sometimes argued that these letters were deliberately composed to fit the structure of worship in these communities (Bornkamm 1969; Cuming 1975) though given the scant state of our knowledge such speculations remain unverifiable. Other types of literature produced by the new movement, such as the memoirs of the apostles (Justin, *Apology* 1.67 – probably forms of the gospels) and books of prophecy (Rev. 22:18; cf. 1 Cor. 14:26) also appear to have been recited.

The central part reading played in worship mirrored its role in the Judaism of the time (Lk 4:16–20; Acts 13:15; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.175; *Antiquities* 16.43; Levine 1987). But it would have been unusual for non-Jews. Most forms of paganism in the period were not textually orientated to any notable extent (though there were exceptions, most notably Orphism).

Once again, however, the explicit Christological content of many of the materials read in worship would have been distinctive: a cursory reading of the different forms of literature contained in the New Testament confirms this prominent characteristic. Indeed, the Jewish scriptures themselves would have been read in such a way that they too would have appeared to early Christians to be, in some sense, a Christological document (something that seems clear from the hermeneutical principles articulated, e.g., in Acts 7:52; Rom. 16:25–7; 2 Cor. 3:12–16; Hanson 1983; cf. Acts 8:28ff.). It is no surprise that what preaching there was appears to have been primarily exegetical (something that seems to have developed from synagogue practice; Acts 13:15ff.; Sanders 1992), attempting to demonstrate the status of Jesus with reference to the Jewish scriptures (Acts 18:28; cf. Acts 2:25ff.).

LORD'S SUPPER

The practice of Christians collectively consuming bread and wine was a central feature of the worship life of most early churches (Mt 26:26–30; Mk 14:22–6; Lk 22:15–20; 1 Cor. 11:17–34), though not necessarily all (John's gospel makes no overt reference to it, despite the apparent sacramentalism often detected in that gospel; Cullmann 1953). Its importance is evident from the role it appears to have had in shaping the traditions about Jesus as they were recounted in the early churches, more specifically in the accounts of the feeding miracles (Mt 14:14–21; 15:32–9; Mk 6:35–44; 8:1–10; Lk 9:12–17; Jn 6:5–13) and some of the resurrection narratives (Lk 24:30; Jn 21:9; Acts 10:41).

The details of the rite remain elusive, although it seems that, at least at the earliest stage, no one presided over it (1 Cor. 11:17–34), in clear contrast to later practice (Ignatius, *To the Smyrnaeans* 8; Justin, *Apology* 1.65). Various theories abound as to whether the Lord's Supper was originally a part of a proper meal (perhaps indicated by 1 Cor. 11:25), took place at the conclusion of a meal (perhaps indicated by 1 Cor. 11:21ff.), or was undertaken on its own without any accompanying meal (Meggitt 1998). Indeed, all these alternative practices may represent stages in the development of the rite (Dunn 1977) or may have existed at the same time in different communities. Its relationship with the so-called love feast referred to in Jude 12 (cf. also 2 Pet. 2:13b; Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7; 27:35) and subsequent literature is also difficult to determine.

The Lord's Supper was understood by the early church as instituted by Jesus during his last meal with his disciples, as we can see from Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:23–6 and in the accounts of the Last Supper in the synoptic gospels (Mt 26:26–30; Mk 14:22–6; Lk 22:15–20). This historical event evidently provided the aetiological justification for the practice, though the fellowship meals, which were a striking feature of Jesus' ministry (e.g. Mt 11:19), may well have contributed to its establishment. These fellowship meals appear to have been given a particular eschatological significance by Jesus (Mt 22:1–14; 25:10; Mk 2:19; 10:35–40; Lk 14:16–24; 22:30; cf. Isa. 25:6; 65:13; 1 *Enoch* 62:14; 2 *Baruch* 29:8; 1 *QSa* 2.11–22), something also present in the accounts of the Lord's Supper (Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18; 1 Cor. 11:26; *Didache* 10; Wainwright 1971). Cultic meals were well known in other traditions, both Jewish and pagan (Lev. 6:29; 7:6; Josephus,

Antiquities 3.231; 4.75; 1 QS 6.4–5; Slater 1991; Garnsey 1999) and these too may have had a part to play in its inception. However, despite the fact that the Last Supper is described as a Passover meal (Mt 26:17; Mk 14:12; Lk 22:8; though see Jn 18:28 for a different tradition) it certainly was not, as many New Testament scholars seem to assume (Jeremias 1964), the *seder* meal we know from later rabbinic sources (e.g. *m. Pesahim* 10) and that is found in modern Judaism. The *seder* developed as a response to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE (Bokser 1984) and the resultant need for different foci of religious observance among Jews. There is no clear evidence that any elements of the *seder* predate this cataclysmic event (Hilton 1994).

There were some obvious differences in the interpretation of the Lord's Supper according to the material we possess (see Jeremias 1964; Marshall 1980). Matthew's account, for example, is unique in emphasizing its efficacy in the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:28) and Luke and Paul are distinctive in the stress they lay on its commemorative nature (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:25). But a key feature common to all traditions is the figure of Jesus himself: the ritual was first and foremost a celebration of the new covenant with God inaugurated by his death (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). For early Christians Jesus both initiated the rite and was its fundamental focus, and as such it was probably a symbolic affirmation of the central 'myth' of the community, the life, death and exaltation of Jesus (if by 'myth' we mean a story that explains the nature of the cosmos and worshippers' place in it) although such an interpretation is uncertain at this early stage when opinions obviously varied among worshippers as to its meaning (1 Cor. 11:17–34).

The rite itself clearly perturbed contemporaries of the early Christians. The emphasis on consuming Jesus' blood (stressed in all four accounts of the Last Supper), however figuratively understood, would have been particularly disturbing for Jews of the time (Lev. 17:10–14; cf. Acts 15:20, 29; Jn 6:52–9) and the practice undoubtedly lay behind the accusations of cannibalism often made against the early Christians (Benko 1985; Edwards 1992).

BAPTISM

Baptism was another central feature in the early church and is visible in a number of traditions that make up the New Testament (Mt 28:19; Jn 3:4–5, 22; 4:1f.; Acts 2:38; 10:47–8; Rom. 6:3ff.; 1 Cor. 1:13–17; 12:13; 15:29; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; Tit. 3:5; Heb. 6:2; 1 Pet. 3:21). Little is known about its form but it is probable that immersion in water was a common feature of many of its manifestations (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33; 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:20). Baptism became understood as an initiation rite for entry into the new community (1 Cor. 1:13–17; Acts 2:38) something particularly visible in Acts where baptism functions in the narrative at crucial moments in the expansion of the gospel as the means by which entrance to the church is confirmed (Acts 2:38–41; 8:12, 35–9; 9:18; 10:44–8; 16:14–15, 30–4; 18:8; 19:5). In this respect it could be regarded as analogous to circumcision among Jews (Col. 2:11–12; cf. Gen. 17:10–11) although circumcision of the heart, rather than the rite of baptism, was understood as the replacement for this prominent Jewish rite among the early Christians (Rom. 2:28f.; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11–12; cf. Deut 10:16; 30:6). Water baptism seems to have been administered quite quickly

in these early years without the lengthy catechumenate that characterized later church practice (Dunn 1975; Dujarier 1979).

The most obvious origin of this rite was the baptism of John the Baptist, which the gospel writers depict Jesus undergoing at outset of his ministry (Mt 3:13–17; Mk 1:9–11; Lk 3:21–2; Jn 1:32–4). This seems to have been a baptism of repentance, which was deeply eschatological in its content (Mt 3:1ff.; Mk 1:4ff.; Lk 3:2ff.; Jn 1:15, 19ff.; Acts 19:4; cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.116ff.). However, the baptism of John cannot fully explain the occurrence of the rite among the early Christian as it was not an initiation rite and was considered, by various New Testament writers, as inadequate in some way (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Acts 19:3–7). So it seems likely that other forms of Jewish ritual washing also had a part to play. Proselyte baptism may well have been the most significant additional influence (*b. Yebamot* 46a, b; *Bekhorot* 47a; Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.9.20) though the ritual ablutions of the impure (Lev. 11:28; 13:6; 15:6; etc.), priests (e.g. Ex. 30:19), sinners (1 QS 3:5–9, *Sibylline Oracles* 4.165) or ascetics (Josephus, *Life* 11) were probably not unimportant in baptism's genesis. Pagan worship, particularly the worship of the mystery cults (Apuleius, *Golden Ass* 11.23), also included rites of immersion and ritual ablution, as early Christian apologists were only too aware (Tertullian, *On Baptism* 5), but the significance of these should not be exaggerated as the resemblances between them and Christian baptism are not particularly close (Wedderburn 1987).

Baptism was interpreted in a number of ways. Early Christians appear to have retained John the Baptist's association of baptism with the forgiveness of sins (1 Cor. 1:13; 6:11; Acts 2:38; 10:43ff.; 22:16; *Epistle of Barnabas* 11:1; *Acts of Thomas* 132) and the coming eschaton (Acts 2:38–40; Jn 3:5; Rom. 6:4–5; Tit. 3:5–7; Hartman 1997). It also seems to have been understood as leading to rebirth (Jn 3:5; Tit. 3:5; Justin, *Apology* 1.61.3); as a means of acquiring salvation (1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 2:40; 11:14; 16:30–3); as a means of purification (Heb. 10:22); and also as God's seal on Christians (2 Cor. 1:21–2; Eph 1:13–14; 4:30; *Shepherd of Hermas*, Similitudes 9.16.1–4; though it not necessarily the case that water baptism is being spoken of on all these occasions).

Once again the figure of Jesus was central to the way this rite was performed and understood. Baptism, from the outset, was accompanied by a regular form of words in which the believers were described as baptized into Jesus' 'name' (Acts 2:38; 10:48), 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Acts 8:16; 19:5 – cf. also Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 1:13; Gal. 3:27; Jas 2:7; Justin, *Apology* 1.61.10–13), or, probably somewhat later, 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Mt 28:19; *Didache* 7:1; Justin, *Apology* 1.61.3, 13; Hartman 1997). Baptism somehow united the believer with Christ (1 Cor. 1:12; Gal. 3:27–8), but given the richness of language employed to describe this union, it is hard to see exactly how this was affected. Nevertheless, it was perceived to be a tangible relationship of some kind as we can see from the part it played in the articulation of early Christian ethics: baptism had a significant role in reconstituting the ethical life of the believer (Rom. 6:12; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; cf. also Col. 3:1–17) and in creating new bonds of solidarity with others who were also 'in Christ' (Gal. 3:27–9). Although, in expressing baptism's significance, New Testament writers also drew on stories of redemption from the Jewish scriptures (1 Pet. 3:20–2; cf. also 1 Cor 10:1–5), the narrative of Jesus was intrinsic

to the way this rite was conceptualized. This is most evident in Paul's description of baptism as participation in the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3–11; Col. 2:12, 20; cf. also 1 Cor. 1:13; Eph. 2:4ff.) but it is also spoken of in different ways elsewhere (e.g. Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50).

Indeed, this might in some sense explain one of the other notable features of Christian baptism: the role of the Spirit. The Spirit played a prominent part in gospel accounts of Jesus' own baptism (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22; Jn 1:32) and was also central to descriptions of the baptism of believers in a number of early traditions (e.g. Acts 2:38; 8:14–17; 9:17–18; 10:47–8; 19:1–6; 1 Cor. 6:11; 12:13). However, there is no clear causal relationship between the rite of water baptism and the reception of the Spirit in early Christian literature: the Spirit could be received by a believer both before baptism (Acts 10:44–8) or after it (Acts 2:38; 8:14–17; 19:1–7). Indeed, it seems quite likely that when baptism is spoken of in the New Testament it often refers to a spiritual event, independent of water baptism, something not necessarily a rite at all but a metaphor for a common form of religious experience (Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Cor. 12:13; Dunn 1970; Fee 1987), which was thought to owe its origins, ultimately, to the activity of Jesus (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33).

Other aspects of this phenomenon have remained elusive, especially the baptism on behalf of the dead mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:29, a practice Paul takes for granted as occurring in the Corinthian community. We have no idea who was being baptized on behalf of whom, and what was the expected result.

Charismatic practices

A group of distinctive religious practices, usually termed 'charismatic', deserve to be discussed together. These practices are usually given this label because they are included among the 'gifts' (*charismata*) of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10 (cf. also 12:28–30; 13:1–3, 8; 14:6, 26; Rom. 12:4–8; Eph 4:11) and are usually said to consist of utterances of wisdom and knowledge, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*), and the interpretation of tongues. (Although it should be noted that not all *charismata* can be thought of as practices of one kind or another; e.g. 'faith' in 1 Cor. 12:9 can hardly be regarded as a specific activity.)

The form that some of these activities took is unclear. We have no idea how a person went about 'discerning between spirits' (1 Cor. 12:10) and we can do little more than guess, from narratives elsewhere in the New Testament, what exactly a person with the gift of 'working miracles' or the person described as having the gift of 'healing' (1 Cor. 12:9) *did*. However, we can say a little more about a couple of practices that receive attention from Paul in 1 Corinthians and also appear in other parts of the New Testament in a similar, if slightly different, form: the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 11:4–5; 12:10, 29; 13:2; 14:1ff.; cf. Rom. 12:6; 1 Thess. 5:20; Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9) and that of glossolalia (1 Cor. 12:10, 30; 13:1; 14:2ff.; cf. Acts 2:1–13; 10:46; 19:6; Mk 16:17). The former appears to have involved an individual delivering an intelligible, inspired message, aimed primarily at believers (1 Cor. 14:4) though also capable of affecting unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:24). The latter

seems to have been quite different. Glossolalia involved speaking an unknown (1 Cor. 14:2), possibly angelic (1 Cor. 13:1), language, incomprehensible to its hearers, requiring interpretation by someone thought to possess another, distinct, gift (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:27; contrary to the phenomenon described in Acts 2:1–13).

It is clear that some of these 'charismatic' practices were rather shocking to outsiders and capable of misinterpretation (1 Cor. 14:23; Acts 2:13). This is unsurprising. Although there were no precise ancient analogies for most of them, particularly glossolalia (Forbes 1997), and such behaviour was not truly ecstatic as worshippers appear to have remained in control of their actions (1 Cor. 14:29ff.), to an undiscerning outsider the activities could have resembled the kind of enthusiastic worship practised by adherents of the mystery cults and that what often stigmatized as mad by more sober contemporaries (Apuleius, *Golden Ass* 8.27).

The Spirit was understood as the inspiration of these forms of worship (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:4; 14:12; etc) and something available to all believers, at least for the earliest Christians, because of its profoundly eschatological character (Dunn 1975). The use, by the author of Acts, of an adapted form of Joel 2:28–32 (which describes God pouring out the Spirit on all flesh in the last days) to interpret the events of Pentecost (Acts 2:17–21) illustrates this conviction well. However, in recognizing the part the Spirit played in charismatic worship we should not overlook the fact that the earliest Christians also thought that such practices took place in 'the body of Christ' (1 Cor. 12:12, 27) and, ultimately, of course, at the instigation of God (1 Cor. 12:6; 12:28; 14:18, 25, 33). We misunderstand the charismatic practices of the first Christians if we fail to note the way that such activities were thought to relate to the broader Christological and theological convictions and experiences of the communities.

Other practices

A number of other practices that can legitimately be called 'religious', and are somewhat harder to characterize, were also undertaken by the earliest churches, or at least some of them. The holy kiss, for example, appears to have been a quite common form of greeting exchanged by members of the first churches (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14). It is difficult to know where the origin of this practice lay (perhaps Jn 20:21–3?) but it was a striking form of behaviour to contemporaries and provided fuel to pagan accusations of Christian immorality (Tertullian, *To His Wife* 2.4). It certainly had a significant role in the construction of group identity among the earliest Christians, symbolically affirming the fictive language of kinship in use among them (see Klassen 1993). The laying on of hands appears to have emerged as an ordination ritual of some kind (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim. 4:14) and became in some early traditions closely bound up with the imparting of the Spirit (Acts 8:17). Fasting, a distinctively Jewish practice (Suetonius, *Augustus* 76), seems to have had a place, if a contested one, in the lives of some early communities (Mt 6:16ff.; Acts 13:2; 14:23; cf. Mt 9:14–15; Mk 2:18–20; Lk 5:33–5) as did anointing the sick with oil, mentioned in Mark 6:13; James 5:14; and *Didache* 10:7 – 11:1. The collection for the relief of the poor in the Jerusalem church, which so preoccupied Paul (Rom. 15:15–32; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8 and 9; Gal. 2:10), should also be mentioned as a religious practice (as should

the giving of alms generally; Mt 5:42; 19:21; Mk 10:21; Lk 6:30, 38; 18:22; Acts 10:4; 20:35; Gal. 6:9; Jas 1:27; Heb. 13:16; 1 Jn 3:17; Garrison 1993) even though it might not be understood as such by many moderns and even though it can legitimately be interpreted in a number of rather more mundane ways (as, e.g., an expression of early Christian economic mutualism; Meggitt 1998). In the Johannine community the unusual practice of ritual footwashing (Jn 13:15) appears to have been instituted.

Most of these practices, where we can determine anything substantially about them, seem to have been rooted in the story of Christ and its consequences for the believer. This is evident, for example, in Paul's use of the narrative of Jesus' descent ('for your sake he became poor') to encourage participation in the collection (2 Cor. 8:9) but can also be seen elsewhere (Johannine footwashing, e.g., was obviously carried out in imitation of Jesus' own actions).

Distinctive absences from Christian worship

Finally, before we end our survey we should be aware that it is not just what the early Christians *did* when they came together to worship that is important but what they *did not do*. The absence of sacrifice in the early churches (though, as we have noted, some took part in non-Christian sacrifices outside the community) is particularly unusual as it was a central feature of virtually all other forms of religious life in the Empire during the period, including most forms of Judaism before 70 CE (Sanders 1992; Burkert 1985; Beard et al. 1998a, 1998b). The absence of a temple, priesthood or festivals would also have seemed strange to most neighbours of the new movement as all three loomed large in the lives of non-Jews and Jews (even diaspora Jews, before and after its destruction, remained concerned with the Jerusalem temple and publicly celebrated many of the key festivals such as Passover, Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement; Barclay 1996). The single initiation rite of baptism would also have appeared striking, at least to pagans, who were familiar with the concept of multiple initiation (Apuleius, *Apology* 55.8). Participation in Christian worship, at least for preventing a person from taking part in the rites of other groups (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:21), although echoing in some sense the exclusivity of Jewish (and Samaritan) worship (Ex. 20:3; Deut. 5:7), would also have appeared rather unusual to most inhabitants of the first-century world for whom such ideas were antisocial and inimical to the healthy religious life of the Empire.

A number of explanations can be given for the elements missing from early Christian worship. However, belief in the uniqueness and finality of Jesus' death (Moule 1956), which is common to the diverse traditions in the New Testament, is probably the best (although there is some diversity in the articulation of this conviction). For example, in Hebrews, it is made clear that priesthood and sacrifice are at an end because Christ has been appointed eternal High Priest (Hebrews 5ff.) after the order of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17–20; Ps. 110:4) rather than Aaron, and he is also the eternal sacrifice (Heb. 9:12) rendering all others unnecessary. Other traditions employ a slightly different logic to arrive at the same conclusion: the death of Jesus is both the consummate sacrifice (e.g. Rom. 3:25; Eph. 5:2; 1 Jn 4:10; 1 Pet. 1:2, 19) and also something that makes all Christians priests, all equally capable of

offering superior spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:4–10; Rev. 1:5–6; cf. also Rom. 12:1ff.). There was no longer a need for temples because, at least for some, Jesus was himself the Temple (Jn 2:19–21; cf. also Rev. 21:22), or the body of Christ, the new community, was now the Temple (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:21). Likewise, the need for festivals was considered at an end because of the completeness of the work done by Christ (1 Cor. 5:6–8; Col. 2:8–19).

CONCLUSIONS

The religious practices of the early Christians were diverse, as were the meanings attached to them. But despite this diversity we should recognize that there was, to a large degree, an essential unity of experience that was assumed to underlie them all. This is evident in the language used by the worshippers themselves to explain what they were doing when they prayed, sang hymns, consumed the Lord's Supper, or undertook any other worship activity. And it was from this common experience – which seems to have been understood as the believer's participation in the narrative of Jesus' earthly and heavenly life, and its consequences, in particular the gift of the Spirit that the new identity of the believer, and ultimately the new religion of Christianity, was forged. If we overlook this fundamental experiential feature, deeply and actively entwined with the unique soteriological story of the community, we miss the essence of early Christian worship.

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PART VI

BIBLICAL FIGURES

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

ISRAEL'S ANCESTORS

The patriarchs and matriarchs



George W. Ramsey

According to Jewish tradition, the patriarchs of Israel are three in number: Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob (Ber. 16b; cf. the frequent mention of these throughout the book of Deuteronomy [e.g., 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 29:13]; 4 Macc. 7:19). The matriarchs, in turn, are four: Abraham's wife Sarah, Isaac's wife Rebekah, and Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel. It is the story of the three generations represented by these Ancestors that is recounted in Genesis 12–50, as the horizon of the biblical narrative narrows abruptly from the whole of humankind (Gen. 1–11) to focus on this one family.

It is not clear from the Bible when the storytellers thought of the patriarchs and matriarchs as having lived. The stories purport to describe these Ancestors as living centuries before the time of Moses, whose lifetime most historians would date in the thirteenth century BCE, but the chronological data concerning the Ancestors are inconsistent.¹ Using a combination of chronological information in the Bible and evidence about conditions in the ancient Near East, scholars have located 'the patriarchal era' at various periods from the late third millennium to the late second millennium BCE (Dever 1977: 92–96; Gottwald 1985: 165–66).

Scholars have long debated whether the stories in Genesis 12–50 were based to some degree on actual historical persons and events, or whether the stories are fictitious legends. Most of the stories in Genesis 12–50 are not reports of the sort that the historian could ever verify. These are mostly family stories, with almost no mention of people or events that would find their way into the kinds of written records that have survived from the ancient Near East.

The artifices of the storyteller are evident in a number of ways in these tales of the Ancestors. Many of the tales have to do with private experiences, and the reader is invited to accept that the all-knowing narrator could have access to scenes and situations to which no real external observer would be privy (e.g., Abram and Sarai *en route* to Egypt, Gen. 12:11–13; Abraham and Isaac climbing Mount Moriah, Gen. 22:6–8; Laban and Rachel in her tent as she conceals the stolen idols, Gen. 31:33–5; Jacob wrestling with an angel, Gen. 32:22–32).

The Ancestral stories exemplify a number of popular folk motifs such as the barren wife (Gen. 16), the success of the younger (Jacob, Joseph), the deceiver deceived (Jacob deceives Isaac, Gen. 27, and subsequently, Laban deceives Jacob, Gen.

29:4–30), and the spurned seductress (Gen. 39:7–17). The employment of motifs such as these makes one suspect that, rather than accounts based on actual people and events, we are dealing with tales and tale elements borrowed from a broad array of folk lore (cf. Irvin 1977).

Mythical, legendary, or unrealistic features such as the following also suggest the presence of imaginative fictionalizing: the excessively lengthy lifespans of the patriarchs and matriarchs (cf. Gen. 23:1; 25:7; 35:28; 47:28), a ninety-year old woman bearing a child (Gen. 17:17), a human being changed into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:17, 24–6), magical prenatal conditioning (Gen. 30:37–43), angel appearances (16:7–14; 18:1–33), and characters of different lands being able to understand and converse readily with one another (Gen. 12:10–20; 20:1–16).

It is not uncommon that the stories in Genesis 12–50 are interpreted as ‘political allegory’ (Alter 1996: 143; cf. Rosenberg 1986) or as ‘typology’ (Brettler 1996: 55–9). Many a character in Genesis 12–50 functions as an eponym, that is, the supposed ancestor of a group that bears the name of the individual. Genesis 25:23 makes it very plain that Jacob and Esau were understood as eponymous ancestors of Israel and Edom, respectively (cf. also Mal. 1:2–5). The twelve sons of Jacob represent the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Gen. 49, esp. v. 28a).² Certain of the narratives and poems in Genesis, which ostensibly refer to individuals such as Jacob/Israel and his sons, are interpreted as encapsulations of tribal experiences – tribal movements, occupations, changes in status (Eissfeldt 1965: 40–1). Some of the genealogical narratives and lists found in various Old Testament books apparently contain, under the guise of individual kinship relationships, fragments of information about changing relationships between tribal and clan groups (e.g., a marriage would represent the union of two groups, concubinage a relationship of unequal groups; see Clark 1977: 126; Wilson 1977; Gottwald 1985: 161–2).

The overarching theme of Genesis 12–50 is the promise to the patriarchs of abundant progeny, blessing, and possession of the land of Canaan (Westermann 1980: 95–163; Emerton 1982). The integration of the assorted stories via this theme (sometimes introducing the theme into contexts where it seems to be intrusive, as Gen. 13:14–17; 15:13–16; 26:2–5) reflects the activity of a compiler bringing diverse materials and tales artificially into association with one another (von Rad 1962: 167–71; see further on the promise theme below).

Such factors as the above have led virtually all scholars to acknowledge the presence in Genesis 12–50 of imaginative elements that evolved over time. The debate continues today among those who believe the stories of the Ancestors to be purely fictitious in nature, composed to serve the ideological purposes of later generations of Israelites (e.g., Garbini 1988; Davies 1992), and those who, while admitting that the stories contain legendary and ideological elements, nonetheless maintain that the stories exhibit features which indicate great age and likely contain recollections of actual people and events (Hendel 1995; Kitchen 1995; McCarter 1999).

An influential school of American scholars has maintained that features in the stories in Genesis 12–50 such as the personal names, social customs, and the Ancestors’ mode of life fit better with the evidence of nonbiblical documents from the early second millennium BCE than in any later age (cf. especially Bright 1981: 77–87). Thus it has been argued that the stories in Genesis 12–50, while not

verifiable in detail, nonetheless have an air of verisimilitude about them, indicating that there was at least a nucleus of historical fact underlying the accounts.

The personal names found in the patriarchal stories (e.g., Abram/Abraham, Jacob, Nahor, Terah) were said to fit more readily into the nomenclature of the population of northwest Mesopotamia of the early second millennium BCE than into that of any later period (Bright 1981: 78). That is the geographical region to which the traditions trace the patriarchal origins (see Gen. 11:31) and the period of ancient history in which the traditions seem to date them.

The most tenacious of the arguments used to substantiate the Ancestral narratives derived from the similarities detected between certain behavior recounted in the patriarchal stories and social customs or legal procedures attested in documents from second-millennium Mesopotamian cultures. Very simply, the argument is that some of the cultural customs and legal practices reflected in the narratives, such as (1) the wife-sister relationship indicated in Genesis 20:12, (2) the 'adoption' of Jacob by Laban, which some interpreters discern in Genesis 29-31, (3) the prices cited for slaves (Gen. 37:28) or (4) the covenant forms reflected in Genesis 21:23-33; 26:28-30; 31:51-4, match up best with customs and laws that prevailed in Mesopotamian cultures of the second millennium – and that comparable parallels are *not* to be found anywhere else (cf. Bright 1981: 78-80; Ramsey 1981: 29-33; Kitchen 1995: 52-6).

Since the 1970s these and similar arguments seeking to locate an exclusive historical context into which the Ancestral narratives 'fit' have suffered crippling attacks. Critics have contended that those who argued in this fashion have (1) seen parallels where none exist, (2) reconstructed either the biblical story or the extrabiblical material or both in order to insert details necessary to create a parallel, or (3) neglected to consider extrabiblical documents from later periods, which provide equally good, if not better, parallels to the practices in the patriarchal stories (see, most notably, Thompson 1974 and Van Seters 1975; cf. Ramsey 1981: 29-40; Hendel 1995: 56).

As discussed further below, it has long been recognized that the Genesis stories were written much later than the times they describe and thus inevitably contain some late elements incorporated by redactors and editors from their own historical circumstances, which were considerably later than the era of the Ancestors.

For example, a number of ethnic relationships reported in Genesis could not have been conceived before the late second or early first millennium (cf. Thompson 1974: 298-308). The association of Abraham's origins with the Chaldeans (Gen. 11:28-29, 31; 15:7) can only have originated after the appearance of this people in the early first millennium (cf. De Vaux 1978: 187-8). The Arameans, among whom wives for Isaac and Jacob are sought (Gen. 24; 29) and among whom Jacob finds asylum from his brother's wrath (Gen. 28-31), did not appear with certainty in Mesopotamian texts until almost 1100 BCE (Van Seters 1975: 29-34). The Philistines (cf. Gen. 21:32-4; 26:1-22) did not arrive in Canaan until shortly after 1200 BCE, that is, not only after the supposed time of the Ancestors, but even after the time of Moses (cf. De Vaux 1978: 503-10).

Occasional references are made to the use of camels (e.g., Gen. 12:16; 24:10-20; 31:17; 37:25), but it is unlikely that the camel was domesticated for use as a burden-carrying animal until at least the very late second millennium BCE (cf. Sarna 1970: 105, 173; Van Seters 1975: 17).

Elements in the 'promise' to the patriarchs that refer to the growth of Abraham's family into a 'great nation' (e.g., Gen. 12:2; 18:18; cf. also 17:5, 6, 16; 35:11) are believed by most biblical scholars to presuppose the development of Israel into a major power (Westermann 1976: 692). Further, those parts of the Jacob cycle that have as their theme the subjection of Edom (Esau) to Israel (Jacob) (Gen. 25:23; 27:27–9, 39–40) likely reflect a period subsequent to David's subjecting Edom (cf. Wagner 1972: 129–30).

On the other hand, there are not lacking some features within the biblical story which suggest that historical memories of earlier periods are indeed preserved in the stories of the Ancestors and that the narratives therefore were not created *de novo* and *in toto* by writers centuries removed from the time purportedly described.³

For instance, the Pentateuchal traditions exhibit a consciousness of a distinction between the religion of the patriarchs and the religion of Israel in later times (Westermann 1985: 575–6; Moberly 1990: 113–14; Hendel 1992: 938). The two versions of Moses' call (Exod. 3:13–17, considered a passage in the 'E' source, and Exod. 6:2–3, the 'P' source) imply that the religion of the pre-Mosaic era was different from that of the religion of Moses and that only with Moses was the divine name 'Yahweh' used. There are other indications that the worship of the patriarchs was directed to deities other than Yahweh: there are frequent references in Genesis to 'the god of my/your/his father,' or to 'the god of Abraham/Isaac/Jacob,' and these references have long been taken to reflect the worship of clan deities who revealed themselves first to the eponymous ancestors of the respective clans (Alt 1966: 1–77; Cross 1973: chs 1–3; Fohrer 1974: 35–42, 60–5). The god traveled with the clan and was considered related to the clan (cf. De Vaux 1978: 272–3).⁴

In addition, the Genesis traditions indicate that the individuals depicted there worshipped various manifestations of the Canaanite high god El after their migration into the land of Canaan (Gen. 16:13; 17:1; 21:33; 31:13; 46:3: the English word 'God' in these verses represents the Hebrew word *'el*). Several scholars believe that the form of the El religion which influenced the patriarchal traditions was an earlier form of that religion than is depicted in the fourteenth-century Canaanite texts from the site of ancient Ugarit (Cross 1973: 13–75; De Vaux 1978: 274–9).

Common sense suggests that if the Genesis narratives were purely the product of later centuries, it would have been more natural to ascribe to that earlier era the form of religion the authors themselves practiced. If first-millennium writers were creating the ancestral legends afresh and 'read back' into the patriarchal period their own relations with Arameans and Chaldeans and customs they themselves followed, why should they not also have imposed on the picture of the Ancestors the religion they themselves practiced?

The kinship association of the Israelites with the Arameans reflected in the patriarchal narratives is held by some scholars to be artificial and of late origin (Thompson 1974: 298–308 and Van Seters 1975: 29–34). It is, however, difficult to understand how and why this notion would have arisen and been given credence at a time when Israel was so often engaged in hostilities with the Arameans. The Arameans are not portrayed simply as peripheral acquaintances; the wives of Jacob (and therefore the very mothers of the Israelite tribes) are said to have been Arameans (cf. also Deut. 26:5). If there was in fact nothing in the background of the people of Israel to link

them ethnically and geographically to northwest Mesopotamia, why would they trace their origins to that region populated in the first millennium by a hated people?⁵

Several texts from the monarchical period of Israel's history exhibit condemnatory attitudes toward the sanctuary at Bethel (1 Kgs 12: 25–33; 13:1–5; Amos 3:14; 5:4–5; Hos. 4:15; 10:5). The significant role which Bethel plays in the Ancestral narratives (Gen. 12:8; 13:3; 28:11–21; 31:13; 35:1–15) seems likely a tradition inherited from a time before Bethel acquired such an ignominious reputation (Sarna 1970: 192).

An inscription of the tenth-century Pharaoh Sheshonk I of Egypt, in detailing various places the king of Egypt seized on an expedition into Canaan, mentions a site in southern Canaan the name of which seems to be 'field of Abram' or 'fort of Abram.' Several scholars have proposed that such a place-name in southern Canaan likely derives from the prominence of a figure by the name of Abram in earlier times in that area, which is the region where the Genesis narratives locate Abraham (Clements 1967: 45n.; Hendel 1995: 55–9; McCarter 1999: 23–24).

On the theory that the stories of the twelve sons of Jacob are political allegory disguising movements and experiences of the tribes bearing the names of the eponymic Ancestors it is noteworthy that Jacob's eldest sons, Reuben and Simeon, represent tribes that play a very meagre role after the emergence of Israel in Canaan. It is argued that the tradition of their seniority must go back to an era when these tribes were in fact preeminent (Noth 1960: 70–1; Sarna 1970: 199; Bright 1981: 135–6).

There is general agreement among Old Testament specialists that, however old the traditions underlying the Ancestral stories might be, the stories in Genesis were not set down in *writing* until the *first* millennium BCE. For the past century the prevailing theory concerning the composition of Genesis has been that the book is a composite work, consisting of at least three different strands, strata, or redactions. The three major strands are commonly labeled J, E, and P, with J being considered the earliest of these and P the latest.⁶ During most of the twentieth century the common dating for 'J' has been in the tenth century, around the time of the monarchy of David and Solomon (Driver 1956: 125; Wolff 1966; Richards 1985: 1152). However, it is held by a growing minority of scholars that the Yahwist (J) material (while still the earliest of the major strands) was not composed until the *sixth* century BCE (Thompson 1974; Van Seters 1975; Whybray 1987; for discussion, see Lemche 1985: 357–66; Nicholson 1991⁷).

Even if the more conservative dating of the Yahwist is assumed (tenth century BCE) and the Ancestral era should be dated as late as the mid- to late second millennium (this latter a view held by very few scholars), there is still a gap of at least several hundred years separating the era of the Ancestors from the writing of their stories. Whether historical recollections can be maintained with accuracy, via oral transmission, for more than about three generations is debated (for differing opinions see Van Seters 1975: 159; De Vaux 1978: 181–5; Kitchen 1978: 66–8; Kirkpatrick 1988: 113–14; Hendel 1995: 70).

In searching for the most likely date for the origin of the stories, scholars attempt to identify an era that would have motivated the themes found in these narratives. For what audience would it be especially critical, for instance, to hear the assurance God gives to Abraham that his descendants will possess the land of Canaan? Some

have proposed that traditions about promises such as this originated among clans in the premonarchical era who wished to acquire a holding of arable land (Noth 1972: 55). Others (e.g., Clements 1967: 58–9) have maintained that the unconditional nature of the promise to Abraham of an extensive empire made it an important theologoumenon to a writer in the time of the Davidic monarchy, helping to secure divine authority for the Davidic monarchy and the great state over which that king presided. Still others argue that the stories were not at all written with the intention of giving a true representation of the early period, but rather to assure Judeans exiled in Babylon in the sixth century that their rightful place was in Canaan and that their absence from that land was but temporary.⁸

The further one distances the compilation of the Ancestral narratives from the era they purport to describe the more tenuous is the correlation that can be expected between the narratives and historical reality. All biblical critics dealing with Genesis reckon *at least* three to four centuries between ‘the patriarchal era’ and the earliest written narrative of that era. If we should take the biblical chronological data at face value, we would be facing a gap of about a millennium to a millennium and a half. Given such a gap, one can only assume that, if the stories in Genesis 12–50 are indeed derived eventually from traditions that reach back into the time before the settlement of Israelite tribes in Canaan, the original traditions have been extensively altered in the history of transmission (see, e.g., Clements 1967: [chs 3, 4](#); Noth 1972: 54–8; De Vaux 1978: 165–77; Garbini 1988: 80–2)

Critical research has concluded that the traditions of the several patriarchs developed independently of one another. Originally separate traditions about these patriarchs have, in the opinion of many scholars, been joined together by redactors at a secondary stage of transmission. The stories of Abraham and Jacob, in particular, are concerned with different *themes* (concern for posterity in the Abraham cycle, concern for land in the Jacob cycle; see Och 1993: 168). The narratives of the two men are centered around separate *geographical areas*, where they likely circulated at one time independent of each other (Anderson 1986: 171–2). The *styles* of the separate traditions differ in that the Abraham traditions consist mostly of individual episodes only loosely related to one another, whereas there is a greater connectedness in the Jacob stories, and the material dealing with Joseph and the other children of Jacob constitutes a well-crafted novella (Noth 1972: 208–13; Humphreys 1988). The Abraham and Jacob traditions include frequent theophanies and divine interventions, but there is a distinct absence of such in the Joseph story.

Consequently it is widely held among Old Testament scholars that the arrangement of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve sons of Jacob in a genealogical chain is an artificial connection made at a relatively late stage in the growth of the Genesis traditions (see De Vaux 1978: 165–77; Garbini 1988: 81–2). The notion of the twelve tribal fathers being sons of a single man named ‘Israel’ (Jacob) is held to be a fiction that grew up in the period of the judges or later. The various groups that eventually constituted Israel acquired their respective homelands in Palestine at different periods of time and in various ways and from diverse backgrounds.⁹ The sense of unity among these assorted groups evolved on Palestinian soil certainly no earlier than the period of the judges.

The quest to establish the historicity of these Ancestors – to whatever degree it

proves successful – seems certain to arrive only at figures quite different from those portrayed in the Genesis narratives. For example, it is widely conceded that the figure of Jacob (1) was not originally linked to Abraham and Isaac in a genealogical chain; (2) was not originally associated with the twelve sons assigned to him in the present form of the biblical narrative; (3) was not really a brother of Edom's ancestor; and (4) was originally a separate figure from 'Israel' (see Noth 1972: 54–8, 79–101; De Vaux 1978: 165–77). To speak of a 'historical Jacob' whose experiences lay behind the stories in Genesis, but to acknowledge that the associations just mentioned are all secondary developments in the growth of the Jacob cycle, is to speak of a 'historical Jacob' quite different from the biblical Jacob. The fact that the stripped-down Jacob was an 'actual historical person' would mean little. It is the *storied* Jacob who has served the Jewish and Christian communities through the years as a paradigmatic figure.

At present the argument between scholars who believe the Genesis stories to be pure fabrication constructed in the interests of ideology and those who believe that there are old elements in the stories seems to be at a stalemate. With biblical scholars having reached an impasse with regard to the quest to recover historical traces of the Ancestors,¹⁰ we may turn our attention more fruitfully to the significance and understanding of the patriarchs and the matriarchs that have emerged within the faith traditions and among interpreters of the Hebrew Scriptures. What meaning or values do readers find in the figures of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and his wives and his children?

Biblical Abraham¹¹ may be characterized as '*the father*' (the Hebrew element *'ab* in the names Abram and Abraham means 'father'). It is from him and his wife Sarah that the nation of the Hebrews, whose story constitutes the Old Testament, will issue. The story can move forward only when Isaac is born to the couple as they are at or near the century mark in age. Abraham is the original recipient of God's covenant with the Hebrew people (cf. Gen. 17). He is depicted in Genesis as a rather well-to-do seminomad living often near and in relationship to urban centers; he has a retinue of servants and many possessions (Gen. 12:5, 16; 13:2–7). He is able to assemble an army to deal with invading foreign kings (Gen. 14). Abraham deals gracefully with his nephew Lot in a difficult situation (Gen. 13), and he comes to Lot's defense on two occasions (Gen. 14:11–16; 18:16–33). Abraham is hospitable to three visitors who turn out to be messengers of God (Gen. 18), who will bring destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

The story of Abraham stretches in effect between two divine imperatives: the command in Genesis 12:1 that Abram should 'Go . . . to the land that I will show you' and the command in Genesis 22:2 that Abraham should take his beloved son Isaac and 'Go to . . . one of the mountains that I shall show you' to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham's unquestioning responses to these commands (cf. the simple report in Gen. 12:4 in a single Hebrew word, *wylk*, 'and-he-went') characterize him as a model of faith and obedience (cf. Gross 1989). However, in several stories Abraham shows himself a man of uncertain faith: twice, in order to save his own life, he pretends that his wife is his sister (Gen. 12:11–13; 20:2–13).¹² Abraham becomes anxious about his lack of an heir, despite God's promise (Gen. 15:2–3); amidst his anxiety, Abraham heeds his wife's suggestion to lie with the Egyptian

maid Hagar (Gen. 16) in an effort by the couple to secure a son by a means of their own devising.¹³ Abraham laughs in disbelief when God announces the imminent pregnancy of ninety-year-old Sarah (Gen. 17:15–19). Notably, however, in contrast to the first – anxious – recorded words of Abraham to God (Gen. 15:2, 8), the last utterance recorded of Abraham (Gen. 24:7) expresses absolute confidence that the Lord will keep his promise (Sarna 1970: 171).



Figure 37.1 Rembrandt, *Abraham and Isaac*. In this etching from 1645, Rembrandt has depicted Abraham's dilemma as he and Isaac might have conversed about the imminent sacrifice: with one hand the father grips his heart and with the other he points towards the heavens, whose will he is constrained to obey. Isaac appears to comprehend little. Copyright The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. B.34.

Not only is Abraham commonly represented, especially in Christianity,¹⁴ as a paradigm of faith in God (cf. Rom. 4; Gal. 3:6–9; Heb. 11:8–12); his obedient responses to God's commands have also qualified him as a paragon of faithfulness (cf. Gen. 26:5; *Test. Benj.* 10:2–5). The rabbis often spoke of Abraham's faithfulness such that his merits were sufficient to have salvific effect for his descendants (cf. Moberly 1990). Jewish and Muslim writings credit Abraham with rejection of idolatry (*Jub.* 11–12, 15; *Apoc. Abr.* 1:1 – 9:6; 29:1–8; Qur'an 2:135; 6:74; 19:41–50) and obedience to the Torah even in the centuries before the Law was given to Moses (*Gen. R.* 64:4; *Ned.* 32a; *Yoma* 28b).

No event in the Abraham story has been more significant in later religious history than the story of the Binding of Isaac (Gen. 22), frequently referred to as the 'Akedah' (after the Hebrew term for 'binding'). The costliness of the sacrifice that Abraham is bidden to make is stressed by the Lord's instruction, 'Take your son – your only son – the beloved – Isaac' (Gen. 22:2). As the command to leave his homeland (Gen. 12:1) had bidden him to break with his past, so this command to offer up the heir to the promise bids him to break with his future.¹⁵ New Testament writers utilized several themes of this story: Hebrews 11:17–20 cites Abraham as one of the principal exemplars of faith; James 2:21–3 affirms the faithfulness of Abraham to illustrate the teaching that works accompany faith; the language of Paul in Romans 8:32, referring to God's not withholding his son Jesus, seems to reflect the Septuagint language of Genesis 22:16; some recent studies have perceived the influence of Genesis 22:2 on the report of the utterance from heaven at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration (Daly 1977).

In the biblical account of the second generation of Ancestors, Isaac proves to be a rather pale and passive character. After his long-awaited birth, the first episode involving him is the Akedah passage, in which his is a passive role. When it is time to secure a wife for Isaac, a servant is dispatched by Abraham to accomplish this (Gen. 24). The last episode in which we see Isaac is one in which he cannot see (Gen. 27), and the focus is more on his son Jacob securing a blessing by deception. The only episode in which Isaac holds anything like the center of the stage is the episode recounted in Genesis 26 of his sojourn in Gerar – and here he seems to mimic behavior of his father (cf. Gen. 12, 20), in passing off his wife as a sister.

In the course of later Jewish interpretation of the Akedah the emphasis on the character of Isaac was expanded. Stress was put on the *willingness* of Isaac's near-sacrifice (e.g., 4 Macc. 13:12; cf. Daly 1977 and references there; also Qur'an 37:103). Some interpreters reckoned him to be a man at the age of thirty-seven giving voluntary consent, exhibiting filial piety and devotion to God.¹⁶ According to many rabbinic interpreters the merits of Isaac's offering himself up assured redemptive benefits for his descendants.¹⁷ During times of Jewish struggles against Rome, Isaac perhaps served as a model to inspire voluntary martyrdom (Davies and Chilton 1978: 522, 529).

The narratives about Jacob/Israel constitute a national self-portrait: this is the man whom the Israelites claimed as their eponym – he was their 'Uncle Sam,' their 'John Bull.' In effect they were saying, 'Jacob is who we are.' The candor of the Israelite storytellers is striking, for of all the Ancestors Jacob/Israel is the most morally ambiguous. In portraying Jacob the Israelites acknowledged that they themselves,

with all of their keen abilities and their election by God, proved to be calculating, greedy, and deceitful.

Jacob is from birth designated by the Lord as the preeminent of the twins born to Rebekah (Gen. 25:23). According to the blessing by his father, Jacob will be lord over his brothers (Gen. 27:29). But he gains superiority over his twin Esau by greedy and devious means (Gen. 25:29–34; 27:1–40), and he has to flee the promised land to escape Esau's wrath. Jacob does not impress one as an upstanding, God-fearing paragon of faith; the only reference Jacob makes to God in his early career occurs when he takes the Lord's name in vain to deceive his blind father (Gen. 27:20). Jacob's calculating nature is displayed in his carefulness to ensure that his acquisition of the birthright of his elder brother is airtight (Gen. 25:31–3), in his hesitancy to enact Rebekah's plan to deceive Isaac (27:11–12), in his bargaining attitude to God at Bethel (28:20–2), in his careful approach to the reunion with Esau (32:3–8), and in his avoidance of settling in close to Esau (33:12–17) (cf. Alter 1996: 150). Nevertheless the biblical story affirms that the divine word of assurance supports Jacob at nearly every crucial point in the story (Gen. 25:23; 28:13–15; 31:3; 32:28; 35:9–12).

After leaving the promised land to flee from the wrath of his brother and spending twenty years in the employ of his equally devious uncle Laban, whose two daughters become Jacob's wives (Genesis 29–31), Jacob does seem to have matured and changed. He credits his success in Laban's home as the work of the Lord (Gen. 31:5–9, 42), and in his prayer to God on the eve of encountering his brother Esau he acknowledges his unworthiness and his need for deliverance by the Lord rather than by his own craftiness (Gen. 32:10–13 [English 9–12]). In recognition of this maturing, his name is changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28 [English 29]; cf. 35:10).¹⁸ Nonetheless there is ambiguity even after this point. After the name change there are still signs of mistrust. Jacob declines to accept Esau's invitation to visit (Gen. 33:12–18). He does not seem to act nobly in the incident of the rape of his daughter Dinah (Gen. 34:5, 30). In Genesis 37–50, which constitutes the latter part of the Jacob story in tracing the history of his twelve sons and one daughter, we witness Jacob behaving unwisely in the treatment of his children – clutching Joseph and Benjamin in a favoritism that threatens the family's unity. Rather noticeably, the narrator continues to refer to him by the name 'Jacob' as often as by the name 'Israel' (e.g., Gen. 33:1, 18; 34:5; 37:1; 42:1; 47:7), suggesting that there is still at least some of the old devious, calculating, acquisitive character present.

Even though there are few evaluative comments about Jacob's behavior in the biblical text, it would seem that the storyteller intends the reader to infer from the subsequent difficult experiences of Jacob that his devious ways are to be adjudged negatively (Berger 1987: 55–7). He himself is more than once the victim of deception (cf. Gen. 27:1–40; 37:23–35).¹⁹ He suffers many years under the false impression that his beloved son Joseph was killed by a wild animal. And in Genesis 47:9 Jacob himself notes that 'few and evil have been the days of the years of my life' (cf. Sarna 1970: 183–4; Lockwood 1995: 105n). Whatever the estimate of Jacob's character by narrator or reader, it seems that the biblical storyteller delights in showing the nation's eponym get his 'comeuppance' as the deceiver is deceived, as the younger sibling who supplanted his firstborn brother learns via a painful lesson from his

father-in-law that this reversal of primogeniture cannot always be the case; and this Jacob who was destined to be 'lord' becomes a servant to Laban (Gen. 29:15–20) and, ironically, to Esau (Gen. 32:5–6, 19 [English 4–5, 18]).

Allusions to Jacob in later Old Testament texts (Hos. 12:3–5 [English 2–4]; Jer. 9:3 [English 4]; Isa. 43:27; Mal. 3:6ff.) suggest that the tradition construed Jacob as a cheat and deceiver (but cf. Gese 1995: 40–3 for a different interpretation of the prophetic texts). On the other hand, Malachi 1:2–3 makes it clear that Jacob was beloved by God, and Paul picks this up in Romans 9:13.

The exile from and return to the promised land by Jacob must surely have functioned as a paradigm and a presage for the experience of the Jewish exiles in the sixth century BCE (Schreiner 1989; Walters 1992: 607), at which time the stories were probably being redacted (and, according to some scholars, initially composed).

The stories of the Ancestors reflect a society that was patriarchal, often treating women's value as deriving primarily from their usefulness to male ends. The stories in Genesis 12–50 generally give the voice and the viewpoint of the female figures short shrift (cf. Fuchs 1985: 120–1, 132). The matriarchs are given scant mention in the Bible outside of the book of Genesis (in the Old Testament, only Jer. 31:15; Isa. 51:2; Ruth 4:11). The patriarchal complexion of the Ancestral narratives may be seen, for instance, in Genesis 12, where Sarah, who is to be the mother of the 'great nation,' is repeatedly 'taken' (voicelessly) in verses 5, 15, and 19 (cf. Exum 1985: 75). Most strikingly Sarah is denied any voice in the story of Isaac's near-sacrifice (Gen. 22). The women in the stories of Genesis 12–50 are present primarily to ensure that the line of the promise is kept legitimate, for there are certain parameters within which any man who bears the promise is to marry (cf. Gen. 24:3–6; 28:1–2), and the woman's role is incomplete unless she fulfills the function of giving birth to perpetuate the patriarch's line. As they seek to play this societally prescribed role, the women are often thrust into circumstances of competition and jealousy (Fuchs 1985: 131–2; Yee 1992).

Nonetheless, female characters in these Ancestral tales play pivotal roles and model noteworthy qualities (Exum 1985: 75–6). The wives of the patriarchs show themselves to be capable of shrewdness and initiative, sometimes exhibiting more resourcefulness than the males in the family: for example, Sarah: Genesis 16:1–2 (Abram 'obeys' Sarai); Rebekah: Genesis 24:57–8; 27:5–17;²⁰ 27:46; Rachel: Genesis 30:14–16; 31:19, 34–5.

Sarah, like Abraham, is the recipient of God's blessing (Gen. 17:15–16; 21:1). Sarah becomes the vehicle of the promise even when her human capacities are most unpromising. She conceives a son after she is the age of 90 and 'dried up' (18:12; cf. Exum 1993: 144) and her husband is 100. By taking the initiative in the expulsion of Hagar (Gen. 21:9–14), it is Sarah who ensures Isaac's inheritance, and God endorses Sarah's proposal (Exum 1985: 77). Rabbinic interpreters extolled the beauty and the hospitality of Sarah (*B. Bat.* 58a; *Sanh.* 39b; *Gen. R.* 40:4; 60:16), and they perceived Sarah's being taken into the Pharaoh's harem (Gen. 12:15) as a foreshadowing of the Israelites' being held in Egypt (note even the plagues that come upon Egypt, 12:17).²¹ In the New Testament, Hebrews 11:11 celebrates Sarah's faith alongside that of Abraham.

Hagar is not commonly reckoned among the matriarchs of Israel, but in a discussion of the women in Genesis she deserves mention. The (mis)treatment Hagar receives at the hand of Abraham and Sarah (16:6; 21:9–14) and the Lord's subsequent care for her make her story a fit vehicle to communicate God's concern for the oppressed – of whatever race (Schwantes 1988). She is a non-Israelite whose character exhibits some of the same traits as Abraham: God engages in a dialogue with Hagar (the only female in Genesis thus blessed) *twice* (Gen. 16:7–14; 21:17–19)²² and makes a promise to her regarding her son (Gen. 16:10–12; 21:18);²³ she responds with faith (16:13); God provides for her when hope seems lost (21:15–21) (Gordon 1985).

Isaac's wife Rebekah is a more interesting and more active participant in mediation of the promise to the next generation than is her husband. Rebekah is one of the most appealing women in the Old Testament. She demonstrates hospitality in the first scene where she appears (Gen. 24:18–27). In a fashion reminiscent of Abraham, when she is bidden to leave her family to go to Canaan, she responds, 'I will go' (again one word in Hebrew: *'lk*). She is able to help fill the void left in Isaac's life by the death of his mother Sarah (Gen. 24:67; *Gen. R.* 60:16; cf. Frettlöh 1994). Rebekah shares with Abraham's wife Sarah and Jacob's wife Rachel the condition of barrenness, but, unlike the other two, she does not resort to a surrogate wife to secure children during twenty years of barrenness (and therefore avoids the jealous competition with another woman, which engaged Sarah and Hagar, and Rachel and Leah). It is Rebekah rather than Isaac who receives word of God's plan for their sons (Gen. 25:23).²⁴

Commentators have differed in their estimate of Rebekah's decisive role in the deception (Gen. 27) of ageing blind Isaac by her favorite son Jacob, the divinely intended heir to the promise: is she heartless and cruel to her blind husband, or is she the faithful and resourceful instrument whereby God's intent is achieved (cf. Turner 1985)? Rabbinic commentators were usually generous in their estimate of Rebekah (*Lev. R.* 23:1; *Gen. R.* 65:15). Paul speaks affirmatively of her in Romans 9:10–13. A good many interpreters, however, have tended to be judgmental, characterizing her as scheming, duplicitous, and self-seeking (cf. Vawter 1977: 299; Davidson 1979: 137; Steinberg 1984: 180–1; Walters 1992: 601–2); other recent studies have advanced a positive assessment of her, recognizing in her one who is willing to put herself in jeopardy (cf. Gen. 27:11–13) for the sake of her son and fulfillment of God's will (Allen 1979; Turner 1985).

Leah and Rachel, daughters of Laban the Aramean (and therefore nieces of Rebekah), engage in a sibling rivalry that mirrors the rivalry between Jacob and his brother Esau. As noted above, their rivalry in the narrative is engendered by the need each feels to provide children for Jacob; in an ironic twist on the patriarchal system, Jacob becomes manipulated by his two wives during the course of their 'competition' (Gen. 30:3–4, 14–16; cf. Pardes 1994: 32; Brenner 1997: 209–10).²⁵

Leah, though the less favored wife of Jacob, does manage to produce three times as many sons as Rachel. The storyteller's use of irony is especially effective as the deceitfulness of Laban, whereby Jacob acquired Leah as his first wife, leads eventually to the birth of six sons by this woman to whom Jacob would not have intentionally become betrothed: and among these six sons are the eponymous



Figure 37.2 Tintoretto, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*. Copyright Museo del Prado, Madrid.

ancestors of the priestly and the royal tribes of Levi and Judah (whence would eventually come such noteworthy Israelite figures as Moses, Aaron, and David . . . and Jesus). Leah was privileged to be entombed with Jacob and his ancestors, whereas Rachel was buried on the way to the Judahite town of Ephrath, or Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19). Rabbinic interpreters develop Leah's character more positively than does the Old Testament: for instance, her 'weak' eyes (Gen. 29:17) are explained by her weeping that she might have to wed the wicked Esau; and the rabbis taught that Leah implored God on Rachel's behalf so that Joseph, who was to have been Leah's son, was born to Rachel (Dresner 1989: 155).

Rachel likewise is treated more positively by later Jewish interpreters (Dresner 1989: 157). It was her anguished silence on Jacob's wedding night that allowed the substitution of Leah for herself to occur; the rabbis taught that when 'God remembered Rachel . . . and opened her womb' (Gen. 30:22), it was that silence which God recalled (*Gen. R.* 73:1–4). Rachel's theft of her father's gods (Gen. 31:19) represented an effort on her part to wean him away from idolatry. Her burial place on the way to Judah was to be a site whence she could comfort the Jewish captives centuries later on their way to Babylonian exile (cf. Jer. 31:15).²⁶

The election of this family to be God's chosen ones has always been a motif laden with mystery (cf. Deut. 7:6–8; 9:4–5). The family of the Ancestors seems at times almost dysfunctional, and even the most noble figures among the patriarchs and matriarchs exhibit unappealing behavior. Yet the story of the generation following Jacob, Rachel, and Leah shows the theme of the divine promises developing steadfastly towards fulfillment. By the end of the book of Genesis the family has grown significantly (Gen. 46:26–7), and the family has prospered and has been a medium of prosperity for others (cf. Gen. 30:25–30; 41; 47:27). The only part of the three-fold promise for which the fulfillment seems uncertain is the assurance that Abraham's family would possess the land of Canaan: at the end of Genesis the family, seventy in number, is settled comfortably in Egypt. The stage is set for the birth

of the Israelite nation out of the experiences of the exodus from Egypt, the covenant at Sinai, and the resettlement in the promised land, events described in the Old Testament books of Exodus through Joshua.

NOTES

- 1 For example, Gen. 15:13 relates that Abraham's descendants will sojourn in Egypt for 400 years (Exod. 12:40–1 gives a slightly different time span). But Gen. 15:16 indicates that the period in Egypt will last but four generations, and Exod. 6:16–20 indicates a four-generation sequence from Levi (one of Jacob's twelve sons) to Moses.
- 2 Some of the individuals (e.g., Judah, Ephraim, Naphtali) bear names that probably were originally geographical terms (Noth 1966: 55–6; De Vaux 1978: 547, 665), presumably deriving from the areas where certain clans resided.
- 3 Even the scholars who wish to date the Genesis narratives quite late (period of the Babylonian exile, viz., mid-sixth century BCE) usually acknowledge that those late writers had some prior traditions to work with, which they expanded (Van Seters 1975: 313; Garbini 1988: 80). These scholars do not give a clear indication of how much earlier than the exile they would date the origin of those traditions.
- 4 Note also the distinction made in Josh. 24:2, 14–15, between Yahweh and the gods of the fathers. Herrmann 1975: 48 comments, 'The absence of any such title as "the God of Moses" may already be taken as an indication that in the case of Yahweh we are dealing with a different type of deity from the Gods of the fathers.'
- 5 Garbini 1988: 77–8 suggests a possible answer in proposing that it was an effort on the part of Jewish exiles to ingratiate themselves with the ruling powers of Mesopotamia.
- 6 Evidence for the existence of multiple sources (cf. Driver 1956: 8–13; Eissfeldt 1965: 182–8) include such items as different names used for God and for certain sites, multiple occurrences of the same tale motif (e.g., Gen. 12 // 20 // 26; the naming of Bethel in Gen. 28:19 and also in 35:15), diverse writing styles, awkwardnesses or inconsistencies in the narrative (e.g., although Gen. 16:16 and 17:1–21 indicate that Ishmael would have been a teenager by the time of the episode in ch. 21, 21:8–21 implies that Ishmael was but an infant). Differing opinions have been expressed as to whether these sources were separate strands or 'threads' – even documents – or whether the later strata were simply *supplements* to the earlier. See Knight 1985 for discussion.
- 7 One consideration in the arguments of this latter group is the virtual silence concerning the Ancestors in traditions outside of Genesis prior to the eighth century BCE. If the Ancestral stories were known in Israel from the time of the settlement in Canaan, why is there virtually no allusion to them prior to the eighth-century prophet Hosea (Hos. 12:2–6)? There is no mention of *Abraham* before the time of Isaiah (29:22) unless 1 Kgs 18:36 is a genuine recollection of the ninth-century Elijah. *Isaac* is mentioned in two texts in Amos (7:9, 16), but the term is used there as a synonym for the corporate entity Israel. The few allusions to *Jacob* will be discussed below, but none is older than the mid-eighth century. It would seem that the Israelite prophets would have made more numerous references to well-established traditions. Even the rather frequent references to 'Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' in the book of Deuteronomy (commonly dated in the seventh century) have been challenged as late additions (Van Seters 1972 and Römer 1990 argue that Deuteronomic references to 'the fathers' originally had in mind the exodus generation, not the pre-exodus patriarchs).
- 8 Lemche 1996: 32; Van Seters concedes a bit of the tradition to be early, but he asserts, among other points, that literacy was not at a high enough level in the time of the United Monarchy to expect a product such as the Yahwist's work (1992: 38–42, 332).
- 9 This issue is related to the problem of the process of emergence of the 'Israelites' in Palestine – whether as invaders from outside the land, peaceful infiltrators, indigenous peasant groups rebelling against urban power structures, or resettlement of urban folk in rural areas because of climatic changes – or some combination of these. Cf. Ramsey 1981: 65–98; Dever 1992; Halpern 1992; Lemche 1992.

- 10 Some have been wondering out loud if it is even possible to write a history of Israel prior to the eighth century BCE (Davies 1992; Brettler 1995: 3; Dever 1996: 22*). Most recent histories of Israel decline to begin the 'history' prior to about 1200 BCE, beginning with the people whom we know as the Israelites settled in the land of Palestine (see Ahlström 1993). Soggin 1984 begins ca. 1000 BCE with David and Solomon; likewise Miller and Hayes 1986. In the absence of contemporary extrabiblical evidence, such historians are now averse to simply paraphrasing the account in Genesis to 2 Samuel and ascribing validity to this record of the Hebrews in the years prior to a time when monuments outside the Bible attest their existence; according to these historians, the story in the Bible should not be used as a primary source for the writing of earliest Israelite history.
- 11 Although the name Abram is used for him until the name change in Gen. 17:5, for convenience he will customarily be referred to throughout this chapter as Abraham. Likewise with Sarah (originally Sarai).
- 12 Although Gen. 20:12 (where we have only the word of Abraham to guide us) indicates that this was not a complete lie, the use of the ruse by Isaac – where it is a lie – in Gen. 26:7 as well as its use, Gen. 12 and 20 prompts us to regard it as a lie in Gen. 12 and 20. Moreover, Gen. 11:31 identifies Sarah as the daughter-in-law of Terah, Abraham's father.
- 13 Berg 1982 points out certain similarities to the forbidden fruit story (Gen. 3) which suggest that the action of Abraham and Sarah is to be understood not as an act of admirable resourcefulness, but of faithless lack of trust in the word of the Lord: for example, the wife 'takes' and 'gives to her husband' in an act that seems quite reasonable; punishment follows (in the maid's belittlement – v. 4 – of Sarah); and as in Gen. 3, there is a shifting of blame, v. 5.
- 14 *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Roth 1971, 2:119, points out that, among Old Testament characters, Abraham is second only to Moses in the number of times mentioned in the New Testament. Philo describes Abraham as 'renowned,' and this is borne out by frequent reference to him in Greek literature, where he is treated positively even by writers who commonly were critical of the Jews (Bowley 1994: 221–32).
- 15 Cf. Tribble 1991:173 and references there. Tribble interprets the story as one which elucidates Abraham's characteristic of nonattachment. She argues that throughout the narrative cycle Abraham is portrayed as one who is nonattached (to homeland, to the wife whom he is willing to swap away for his own life, to Canaan, which he is ready to let Lot have, to Ishmael, whom he is willing to send away), and that it is in fact *Sarah* who has the unique tie with Isaac and for whom, according to the logic of the story, the test in Gen. 22 would be more appropriate. However, the poignancy of the narrative in Gen. 22, esp. v. 2, belies any suggestion that the command did not test Abraham's attachment to Isaac. Yahweh's declaration in 22:12 moreover indicates that this was a severe test for Abraham.
- 16 Based on Sarah's age of 90 at his birth and assuming that the Binding occurred shortly before her death at age 127 recorded in Gen. 23:1; cf. *Gen. R.* 56:8.
- 17 There is debate among scholars as to whether the rabbinic tradition concerning the expiatory effects of Isaac's action predated and influenced the New Testament theology of Christ's atoning sacrifice, or vice versa. For differing views see Daly 1977; Davies and Chilton 1978; Hayward 1990. An example of the use of Isaac as a type of Christ may be seen in Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus* I,5: 'He is Isaac (for the narrative may be interpreted otherwise), who is a type of the Lord, a child as a son; for he was the son of Abraham, as Christ the Son of God, and a sacrifice as the Lord, but he was not immolated as the Lord. Isaac only bore the wood of the sacrifice, as the Lord the wood of the cross. And he laughed mystically, prophesying that the Lord should fill us with joy, who have been redeemed from corruption by the blood of the Lord. Isaac did everything but suffer, as was right, yielding the precedence in suffering to the Word. Furthermore, there is an intimation of the divinity of the Lord in His not being slain. For Jesus rose again after His burial, having suffered no harm, like Isaac released from sacrifice.'
- 18 Sarna, 206: 'The struggle with the angel may . . . imply the final purging of those unsavory qualities of character that marked his past career.'
- 19 One midrash (*Gen. R.* 70:19; 71:2) expands the story of his wedding night by imagining that as he cried out 'Rachel! Rachel!' through the night Leah always answered, much as Jacob had passed himself off as Esau to his blind father (cf. Dresner 1989: 155).

- 20 Note how Rebekah is the subject of the verbs in vv. 14–17 and how Jacob is told to ‘obey’ her voice (27:8, 13, 43).
- 21 Cf. Brettler 1995: 51–5. One writer (van Dijk-Hemmes 1997: 230–2) proposes that in Gen. 12:17 the Hebrew phrase *dabar sarai* might best be understood not simply as ‘because of Sarai’ but should be seen as referring to an outcry (a ‘word’) of Sarah, which elicits God’s response. This would imply ‘that YHWH is the only one towards whom Sarai does not remain speechless’ and one might even venture to say that ‘YHWH now reveals himself as Sarai’s covenant partner’ (232). This would constitute another parallel to Israelite slaves, whose cry the Lord heard (Exod. 3:7).
- 22 The ‘angel of the LORD’ is to be understood as a manifestation of God, not a separate being; note Gen. 16:13.
- 23 Hagar’s son Ishmael was to become recognized as the ancestor of the Arabs and a key figure in the Muslim religion, where it is traditional to regard him rather than Isaac as the one who was nearly sacrificed on Mount Moriah. According to the Muslims, it was Ishmael along with his father Abraham who built the Ka’aba, the most sacred shrine of that faith (Qur’an, 2.125; but cf. Guillaume 1956: 61–2).
- 24 Whether Rebekah received the word directly from God or through some cultic mediator is not clear. Cf. Sarna 1970: 182. Gen. 25:22 states that ‘she went to inquire (Heb. *darash*) of YHWH,’ and the language is very similar to passages such as 2 Kgs 1:2; 22:13; Jer. 37:7, where inquiry is made through a religious intermediary.
- 25 The pathos of the sibling struggle is signified in that it manifests itself in the naming of several of the women’s sons (e.g., Gen. 29:32–3; 30:8).
- 26 Useful summaries of the treatment of the patriarchs and matriarchs in the later Jewish traditions may be found in the individual articles on each of the Ancestors in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Roth 1971).

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CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

MOSES



John Van Seters

THE HISTORICITY OF MOSES

The life and career of Moses is presented to us in the Hebrew Bible within the Pentateuch, spanning virtually the whole of Exodus to Deuteronomy. Reminiscences of his role in the deliverance of his people from Egypt and in his giving of the law are recalled in the historical books and in the Psalms (1 Sam. 12.6, 8; 1 Kgs 8.9, 53, 56; 2 Kgs 18.4; Pss 77.21 [20]; 99.6; 105.26; 106.16, 23, 32; in addition to the numerous references to the law or commands of Moses). He becomes the most revered figure in Judaism, and yet all that we know about him, apart from some later legends, comes to us from the biblical sources.

Since the beginning of the common era Moses was regarded as the author of the Pentateuch, with the possible exception of the account of his death in Deuteronomy 34, both by Jews and Christians so that the Bible was thought to contain an autobiography of his life and career (although most of it in Exodus to Numbers was written in third person style). This opinion held firm until the Enlightenment and the rise of the historical-critical method, which called into question Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch and substituted in his place the work of several authors from a much later period in Israel's history. The events of Moses' life were increasingly viewed as legendary with little hope of getting back to the actual history of Moses and his times.

A major change of scholarly attitude and perspective, however, came about with the recovery and decipherment of the vast quantity of historical documents and monuments of ancient Egypt. These, it was hoped, would allow the historian to sort out from the biblical record just what remained of the historical Moses. The results of intensive investigation over the last 150 years, however, have been both meager and controversial. There are no extant records from Egypt that make any reference to Moses or to the events associated with the liberation from Egypt. The Bible is also very vague about supplying any historical details that would connect Moses with a particular period of Egyptian history. It refers to the kings of Egypt only by the title of 'pharaoh,' without ever giving any names.

In spite of these obstacles, scholars have attempted to use a variety of clues from the account of the Egyptian sojourn and exodus in Exodus 1–15 to try to recon-

struct the circumstances that the biblical story portrays and to establish Moses' place in history. There seems to be fairly strong agreement that Moses has an Egyptian name, derived from the Egyptian verb *msy* (to give birth) and found in such well-known names as Thutmose, Ptahmose, Ramesses, where the verb *msy* is compounded with the name of a deity. The form *mošeh* (Hebrew) would represent the popular shortened form of such names and names of this type occur over a long period of time. However, none can be identified with the biblical Moses. The fact that Moses bears an Egyptian name makes it appropriate to the background of the exodus story, but it can tell us little more. There are a few other Egyptian names among the priests and Levites, notably Hophni and Phinehas, but such names may only be survivals from the time of Egyptian control of Canaan in the Late Bronze Age.

A name by itself does not make a historical personality nor guarantee the historicity of events ascribed to him by the Bible. These events would need to have taken place several centuries before the rise of the monarchy. The Bible itself dates the exodus to 480 years before the time of Solomon's construction of the temple, ca 960 BCE (1 Kgs 6:1), which would place it ca 1440 BCE, during the reign of Thutmose III at the height of the Egyptian empire and political control of Canaan. Scholars have generally found this period inappropriate and rejected the figure of 480 years as an artificial construction of twelve generations of 40 years each.

What has been regarded as a safer clue to the historical period is the reference in Exodus 1.11 to the Israelites building the store-cities of Pithom and Rameses. The latter name is identified with the great capital Piramesse, built by Ramesses II, and this fits the events of Exodus into his reign and that of his son Merneptah. Yet this proof-text is not without problems. The reference to Pithom (Tell el-Maskhuta) is anachronistic for such an early date because recent excavations make it quite certain that Pithom was not built until the end of the seventh century BCE. Furthermore, the biblical name Rameses is a late form of the name that survived long after the demise of the Twentieth Dynasty and its capital so that even the Joseph story anachronistically refers to the region as 'the land of Rameses.'

The attempt to fit the portrayal of events in Exodus within the history of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties (1550–1200 BCE) has not been any more successful. The pharaohs of this period campaigned actively in Syria–Palestine and took prisoners of war from many different peoples and social classes as slaves, and these were dispersed throughout Egypt to serve in many different capacities on private estates, in temple corporations, in the military, in royal estates, throughout almost the entire workforce. In time many Asiatics became free persons within Egyptian society with varying rank and status in construction projects, in the military, in the royal administration and in the priesthood. The time of Ramesses II, in particular, was one of great assimilation of Asiatic religion and culture in Egypt. Commerce and diplomatic exchange between Egypt and the Levant were very active throughout the period, as well as the need for some military 'security' operations in Canaan in the wake of conquest and the threat to their control there from more distant powers like the Hittites. None of this is reflected in Exodus.

One of the groups from whom captives were taken into Egypt were called the *Habiru* (Egyptian *'apiru*), and some scholars have been eager to identify them with the 'Hebrews' (*'ibrîm*), the term often used in Exodus for the Israelites in Egypt

(Exod. 1.15–22; 2.6–7, 13; 3.18; 5.3; 7.16; 9.1, 13; 10.3). The mere similarity of names, however, does not establish their identity and much speaks against it. The *Habiru* were a social class of freebooters, often used as mercenaries, and were widely scattered throughout the Near East during much of the second millennium BCE. They were not a specific ethnic group and were not necessarily kept apart in Egypt from others as a distinct group in an isolated location.

The reason given in the Bible for the enslavement of the Israelites was the vast increase in their numbers that made them a security risk, especially in the event of a possible invasion from Asia. However, since Egypt controlled Canaan during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties, there was no threat from that direction. Furthermore, Egypt continued to acquire new foreign slaves through conquest, many of whom were quickly assimilated so there was no threat from that quarter either. At the same time, Bedouin from southern Palestine and the Sinai were allowed grazing rights in the eastern Delta and there is no indication that they were made to serve as *corvée* labor in return. There is no evidence of any acts of genocide against any distinct group or any forced labor of foreigners for particular building projects.

If we understand the story as reflecting the time of the author living in the sixth century BCE (see below), then many of the story's details make much more sense. In terms of geography, the focus is entirely upon the northeastern Delta region of Egypt. The name 'Goshen,' as the region where the Israelites were said to reside, is known only from late geographic texts and corresponds to the Twentieth or Arabia nome on the eastern border of the Egyptian Delta. It lay east of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile and extended at its southern end into the Wadi Tumilat. At its northern end was the 'land of Rameses' and at the eastern end in the Wadi Tumilat was the Eighth nome, the region of Sukkoth with its principal city, Pithom. From Goshen there were two routes out of Egypt, the northern, which would be in the direction of Gaza, 'the way of the land of the Philistines,' and the southern route, 'the way of the desert,' which leads through the Wadi Tumilat past Sukkoth-Pithom towards Lake Timsah, 'the sea' (Exod. 12.37; 13.17–18, 20).

In the time of the exilic author, Egypt had experienced invasion and subjugation by the Assyrians in the seventh century BCE and was under threat from the Babylonians in the sixth century. The building of Pithom as a large fortification and storage depot by Necho II was meant to protect the southern route against this latter threat. Whether foreigners from Palestine were used in this enterprise is difficult to say, although the eastern Delta was a region that harbored increasing numbers of Israelite refugees from the wars of their homeland. While the author is familiar with that part of Egypt that lies closest to Palestine, there is nothing that shows any detailed knowledge of Egyptian life and history. The effort to correlate Moses with Egyptian history is a futile exercise. He now belongs only to legend.

MOSES AS THE FOUNDER OF ISRAELITE RELIGION

Many scholars believe that Moses is the founder of Israel's religion by inaugurating the worship of Yahweh alone, which ultimately led to the rise of monotheism. It has been tempting for some to try to establish a connection between Moses and the

pharaoh Akhenaten on the basis of their common advocacy of monotheism, a view made popular by Freud (in *Moses and Monotheism*, 1939). Some have argued that Moses grew up under Akhenaten and was a devotee of his monotheistic cult. When this form of religion was suppressed by the rival priests of Amon, Moses preserved it among an oppressed group and upon their subsequent departure from Egypt it became their religion. All such schemes attempting to make a connection between Moses and Akhenaten are without any serious historical merit.

Within the biblical tradition the first and second commandments of the Decalogue decree the exclusive worship of Yahweh and an imageless cult. Those who attribute the Decalogue to Moses use it as a basis for their view that Moses was the founder of monotheism. However, it is unlikely that these laws predate the seventh century BCE. Archeological evidence has uncovered inscriptions of the eighth century BCE that contain references to Yahweh being worshipped together with a female consort, Ashera. The first commandment may be viewed as a later protest against such a consort being placed or named 'beside' Yahweh, and this exclusive worship of Yahweh eventually led to monotheism. But the rise of monotheism in Israel did not take place until the exile, eight centuries later than Akhenaten and it was of an entirely different character.

A more modest proposal is to consider Moses as the one to inaugurate the worship of Yahweh among the Israelites. Within the call narrative of Exodus 3 one biblical source (vv. 1–6) describes Moses as having a remarkable religious experience on a sacred mountain, Sinai, in Midian. During this experience Moses receives a revelation concerning the divine name Yahweh and its meaning that he is to communicate to the Israelites in Egypt. Yet the story assumes that the deity's name is already known to them and what is being revealed is a new understanding of the name and the character of Yahweh and his relationship with his people. This piece of dialogue has the character of theological speculation and the concerns of the author's own time and little to do with Moses' introduction of a new cult among the Israelites.

A later version of this call narrative in Exodus 6.2–3, in the so-called Priestly source, states that the name Yahweh was not known to the Israelites and their ancestors (in contradiction to what one finds in Gen. 15), but was being revealed to Moses for the first time. This would support the notion of Moses' innovation of the worship of Yahweh. Yet this version of the story is late and postexilic in date and it supports this writer's scheme of the periodization of divine revelation. There is little reason to view it as historical or based on ancient tradition.

A quite different approach, the so-called Midianite hypothesis, suggests that it was while Moses was temporarily in Midian to escape the threat on his life by Pharaoh that he learned of the new religion from Jethro, the priest of Midian and his father-in-law. This view is also supported by references to the god Yahweh in Egyptian texts of the late second millennium BCE that associate this deity with the southern region of Edom and Seir. And some early poetry in the Hebrew Bible seems to point to this same southern association (e.g., Judg. 5.4–5; Deut. 33.2; Hab. 3.3; Ps. 68.8, 18). The connection is tantalizing but too weak to support any reconstruction of the origins of Israelite religion. Nothing in the account of Moses' dealing with Jethro ever indicates that Moses learned of Yahweh from him. Jethro only acknowledges Yahweh's greatness after Moses speaks to him about Yahweh's deliverance of Israel

from Egypt (Exod. 18). Moses' temporary respite in a foreign region before he returns to deliver his people is a common folktale motif and therefore tells us nothing about the origins of Yahweh religion.

There are others who would see in the Sinai covenant Moses' achievement in creating a unique politico-religious union centered upon commitment to Yahweh and a new social order among his fellow Israelites. These scholars point to the Hittite suzerainty treaty model of the Late Bronze Age, which demands absolute loyalty to the great king based upon past favors and complete obedience to a series of stipulations regulating relations between king and vassal as well as between vassal states. It is suggested that the Sinai covenant of Yahweh's kingship over his people and their relationship with one another is based upon this model. The force of the argument lies in the attempt to establish parallels between this model and the giving of the law and covenant ratification at Sinai in Exodus 19–24, as well as the fact that the conjectured time of Moses and the time of the Hittite empire are relatively close. The theory, however, has come under criticism because the parallels are too forced to be convincing; the treaty form is not restricted in time to the late second millennium BCE, and the greatest correspondence to such a treaty–covenant form is to be found in Deuteronomy – very likely written shortly after Judah had experienced such vassalage to Assyria. There is, today, an increasing tendency to regard the notion of such a Sinai/Horeb covenant between Yahweh and his people as no older than Deuteronomy and therefore it cannot be traced back to Moses.

A variation on this scheme is to view the origins of Israel not so much as a distinct people who came from Egypt and conquered the land of Canaan, but rather as a peasant revolt from within Canaanite society, using a Marxist sociological model. These peasants withdrew their services and migrated to the hill country from the city states of the lowlands and coast. At the same time a group of slaves under the leadership of Moses escaped from Egypt, attributed their liberation to Yahweh and joined those in Canaan who escaped from a similar oppression of the Canaanite overlords. The liberation religion of Yahweh thus provided the means of creating a cohesion and identity for this motley collection. The chief problem with such an approach, however, is that it imposes a sociological scheme on the tradition and the historical data with complete disregard for any critical evaluation of the texts. We have no direct historical witness to any of the events so described, only a fanciful reconstruction. The scheme radically alters the tradition to make it fit and the tradition thus altered supports the scheme.

THE LITERARY TRADITION

The traditions about Moses are contained in the Pentateuch from Exodus to Deuteronomy and all other biblical references to Moses are dependent upon these, unless the unnamed deliverer in Hosea 12.13 is an allusion to Moses. The view of most critical scholars is that none of the Pentateuch's presentation of Moses is derived from Moses himself or contemporary with him, but is the work of multiple authors developing the tradition over a long period of time. At the risk of serious oversimplification, I shall briefly try to indicate the nature of this discussion. One literary theory that has long held sway is that the Pentateuch is the combination of at least

four sources, known as the Yahwist (J), the Elohist (E), Deuteronomy (D), and the Priestly writer (P), and composed in that order. A modification of this view disputes the existence of E (at best very fragmentary) as a work separate from J, and treats J and E as a single corpus, JE. The usual dating for these sources places them in a range from the tenth to the fifth centuries BCE.

A more recent view that is gaining wide acceptance is to view the process as accumulative with a proto-Pentateuchal author (J or JE) in Genesis to Numbers compiling the earliest comprehensive story of Moses, with a Priestly writer (P) expanding this work. Deuteronomy (D) is regarded as originally separate from the rest of the Pentateuch and part of a history that extended from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings. In this scheme D is the oldest of these literary works, dating to the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE with J (or JE) as exilic and P as postexilic. This late dating of the literary presentation would account for the fact that so little is made of the Moses tradition in any sources before the exilic period outside the Pentateuch. It is also this view that in my opinion best fits with the Egyptian background to Exodus 1–15 as sketched above.

This literary-critical study of the Moses tradition, however, is at best only preliminary to a number of different, sometimes competing, concerns. One such interest is in understanding the literary and tradition-transmission process in order to uncover the origins of the Moses tradition and of Israelite culture and religion, even if one is skeptical about obtaining any help from Egyptian historical materials. The history of the preliterate tradition has occupied a lot of attention but with few convincing results because it is so difficult to control any reconstruction of the various stages of oral tradition about Moses from their present literary forms.

Another approach is to eschew the quest for oral origins as too speculative and to focus on the literary works that make up the tradition in order to unravel and explicate their ideological and theological use of the Moses tradition within their historical contexts. The major obstacle to this research is to get complete agreement on the precise limits of the particular 'documents,' their relationship to each other and the dating of the sources relative to each other and to the history of Israel.

Yet a third method is to take the text as it is, in spite of its complex history of development, either as the product of a 'canonical process' that yields a theological unity and meaning, or as an autonomous literary work in the postmodernist sense. This also is not without its problems. On the one hand, the formation of the canon was a historical process whose investigation cannot be divorced from the literary history that preceded it. On the other hand, a literary work cannot be investigated until its limits and context are established and the present biblical divisions of chapters and books have long been proved inadequate. For a comprehensive treatment of the Moses tradition, there is no escape from the diachronic investigation of the literary works that make up this corpus.

BIBLICAL PORTRAITS OF MOSES

In what follows I shall try to set out the literary presentation of Moses' roles as deliverer, leader, lawgiver and prophet to his people. In doing so I shall make use of the insights of literary criticism, making reference where appropriate to the

different literary levels in the tradition, using the simplified scheme in which J represents the older version of the Moses tradition in Exodus to Numbers, P the later expansion of this version and D the portrayal of Moses within Deuteronomy. Nevertheless, my primary concern here is an examination of the traditions about Moses in their final literary forms within the larger context of the Hebrew Bible.

Moses as deliverer of his people

The general background for the role of Moses as deliverer is the tradition of a period in the past when Israel experienced oppression and enslavement in Egypt from which Yahweh, their God, 'redeemed' them. This is often mentioned in the Hebrew Bible without any reference to Moses (note, e.g., Ezek. 20). The Pentateuch continues to stress the theme of God as redeemer but now makes Moses the human agent.

The J writer in Exodus 1 sets out the account of how the enslavement of the Israelites arose out of a kind of xenophobia that ultimately deteriorated to attempted genocide, which then provides the context for the story of Moses' birth and his rescue from the Nile by the daughter of pharaoh (Exod. 2:1-10). Once this story of the child's rescue is told, then the genocide theme disappears, and the issue again becomes that of slavery and hard labor. The story of Moses as a threatened child rescued and reared under the very nose of the pharaoh to become deliverer of his people is paralleled by similar folktales that were told about Sargon of Akkad and Cyrus the Persian. It is a common motif used in the heroic presentation of great kings and leaders. However, Moses' initial attempt at deliverance, whereby he kills an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew, is antiheroic because it ends in failure and leads only to flight to the land of Midian, where he becomes a shepherd (Exod. 2:11-22; 3:1). This prepares the way for the author (J) to present Moses as a leader totally dependent on a divine word from Yahweh for each action he takes, quite different from a military hero.

In Moses' first confrontation with Pharaoh, he is presented more in the role of a labor negotiator seeking to get time off for religious holidays than as a menacing protagonist, and even in this effort he fails and disappoints his fellows. In the plague narrative that follows it is the series of plagues brought by God and merely announced by Moses that turns the tide and forces Pharaoh's hand. In the expansion of the tradition by P, he introduces the theme of a contest between Aaron and the magicians of Egypt (7.8-12). Nevertheless, throughout the plague stories the emphasis is upon the greatness and power of Yahweh to deliver his people.

The climax of the deliverance is at the Red Sea (Exod. 13.17 - 14.31), and here again Moses' role is merely to encourage the people to believe in the divine deliverance. In the J account Moses and Israel do nothing but witness the divine rescue, while in the P version Moses, at God's command, splits the sea with his rod to create a path for the Israelites and, again at the divine command, makes the sea come back upon their pursuers. The effect is that the people fear Yahweh and believe in him and in his servant Moses. It is noteworthy that except for one late addition to Deuteronomy (11.4) there are no references to the sea event in D, even though the exodus is mentioned many times. This suggests that the Red Sea episode is really secondary to the divine deliverance tradition. In its present form in J it constitutes a transition to the wilderness themes and to Moses' direct leadership of his people.

Moses as leader

Apart from an initial contact with Israel's elders in Egypt, which did not turn out very well (Exod. 5.15–21), Moses' direct leadership of the people begins only when they depart from Egypt. Some have tried to construe this role as modeled on that of a king in which Moses is presented as the royal prototype for later Israelite kings. But Moses' leadership in the wilderness bears little resemblance in the biblical tradition to that of a monarch. As their leader Moses is the one to whom the people complain about their hardships in the wilderness. But it is always God who meets their needs, with manna from heaven or water from the rock (Exod. 16.1–36; 17.1–7). In the case of complaints that result in open rebellion of Moses' leadership, it is God who comes to Moses' defense with divine judgment and Moses must plead with God to mitigate the severity of the punishment (Exod. 32; Num. 11; 13–14; 16; 21.4–9). In all of this Moses has no party of supporters, no court, no bodyguard. He is primarily a spiritual leader with no royal trappings to maintain control and no form of royal legitimation.

Moses is the supreme judge and head of the administrative functions of the wilderness community. As such the tradition tells of two occasions in which Moses sets up civil institutions – the one, a system of courts for the purpose of sharing the judicial responsibility of the people (Exod. 18), and the other a council of seventy elders for the general governance of the community (Num. 11.16–30; Deut. 1.9–18). These stories represent etiologies of later Israelite institutions. The basis of all such authority is charisma, the endowment of the spirit. The council of seventy elders, however, was never an institution of the monarchy, and neither J nor P say anything about a future king for the people. Only in D is a limited monarchy envisaged as a future possibility (Deut. 17.14–20) and it is certainly not modeled on Moses in this source.

On a few occasions the Israelites are involved in military encounters, but Moses' role in these is quite limited. In their fight against the Amalekites (Exod. 17.8–16) Joshua is the military captain, while Moses raises his hands as if to petition for divine aid. When Moses sends spies to survey the land of Canaan, it is Joshua and Caleb who play the major role in support of a military campaign and against the negative report of the other spies (Num. 13–14; Deut. 1.19–46). When the people finally attempt a southern assault, Moses does not go with them, and they are defeated. In the campaign against Sihon and Og (Num. 21.21–35; Deut. 2.24 – 3:11) in Transjordan Moses leads the forces in the D account, but in J he recedes into the background. In the campaign against the Midianites in P (Num. 31) it is Phinehas, the priest, who takes charge of the army while Moses remains in the camp. When Moses finally climbs Mount Nebo to die, he is buried in an unmarked grave and receives no posthumous veneration. Moses is not a military hero nor a royal figure in these traditions.

Moses as lawgiver

The theme of Moses as lawgiver is closely associated with the theophany at Sinai/Horeb and with Israel's prolonged stay at the mountain of God, during which

the law was given to Israel through Moses. Many scholars have argued that the giving of the law at Sinai originated as a separate tradition. They argue that it reflects a detour on the way from Egypt to Canaan, and that an older tradition of lawgiving is to be associated with Kadesh. These are matters that are debated within discussions on the tradition-history of the Pentateuch and remain unresolved.

Nevertheless, in the popular mind and even among some scholars Moses has been viewed as the author of the Ten Commandments, at the very least. But the two versions of the Decalogue, in Deuteronomy 5 and Exodus 20, are in the sources D and P respectively, and their language is so characteristic of the D source that there seems little reason to believe that they are any older than the seventh century BCE. The P version in Exodus 20 makes use of the D version but with some modification on the law of the sabbath to include P's theology of creation as reflected in Genesis 1. Even in these two sources the 'ten words' are said to have been given to the people directly without the mediation of Moses and only later written by the finger of God upon the two tables of stone. Furthermore, J does not regard the Ten Commandments as a distinct series and has quite a different set of laws and instructions written on the two tables of stone (Exod. 34).

The J corpus of laws in Exodus 20.22–23.33, referred to as the 'Book of the Covenant' in Exodus 24.7, is a mixture of many types of law, religious and civil regulations, principles of religion and ethics, legal procedures and humanitarian recommendations. These are all given through Moses at one time on Sinai and constitute the basis of the covenant between the people and God (Exod. 24.3–8). Portions of the civil laws are generally regarded as quite old in origin and were perhaps taken over from earlier Canaanite society, but this corpus of laws in its present form derives from the exilic period. The Deuteronomic code (Deut. 12–26) is a body of instructions given to Moses after the Ten Commandments were proclaimed. The D code was delivered to the people in written form in the land of Moab as preparation for their entry into the Promised Land. In fact, the code represents a cultic reform of worship in the time of Josiah (ca 625 BCE). The Priestly code is primarily concerned with setting out an elaborate program of cultic regulations to form the basis for worship during the Second Temple period. Its view of Judean society is strongly theocratic, with the high priest as the real head of state – hence the elevation of Aaron alongside of Moses. The P writer has much of this code revealed to Moses at Sinai (Exod. 25–31, 35–40; Leviticus; Num. 1–10), but some instructions are given during the remaining part of the wilderness journey. In P, Moses' role as revealer and instructor in divine law is the most dominant.

Moses as prophet

The one role directly and unequivocally ascribed to Moses is that of prophet, and this, in fact, shapes and modifies all the others given to him. Perhaps the earliest allusion to Moses in the prophetic corpus speaks of Yahweh's deliverance from Egypt 'by a prophet' (Hos. 12.13). When Moses is called by God to lead the people out of Egypt, his role is to be that of a divine spokesman and prophet, announcing to the people God's revelation to him of their deliverance and God's demand to pharaoh to release his people. The objections to the task that Moses raises are similar to those

in the call narrative of Jeremiah (Jer. 1.4–10), and much of Moses' role as prophet is modeled on the biography of Jeremiah. Throughout his encounter with Pharaoh, Moses uses the standard prophetic formula 'Thus says Yahweh . . .' The sole basis of his authority is as the bearer of the divine word.

Another important aspect of the prophetic role that is drawn from the Jeremiah tradition is that of Moses' function as intercessor on behalf of his people (Jer. 7.11; 11.14; 14.11; 18.20; 37.3; 42.2, 20). When Pharaoh increases the burdens of the people after Moses' first audience, Moses prays to God about their hardships and this brings the divine response of the plagues. When Pharaoh begs Moses to end a plague, Moses intercedes with God on his behalf (Exod. 8.4–5 [ET 8–9], 24–6 [ET 28–30]; 9.28; 10.17–18). Throughout the wilderness experience in the murmuring stories, when the people face hardships because of a lack of food or water, Moses petitions God for divine relief. When the people are rebellious or sin and are punished by God, Moses begs for mercy and pardon on their behalf (Exod. 15.25; 17.4; 32.11–13, 30–32; Num. 11.2; 14.13–19; 21.7). The construing of the religious leadership of the community as prophetic is a major shaping of the Moses tradition and belongs to both the J and D portrayals of Moses.

In addition to this prophetic shaping of all Moses' activities, there is the explicit identification of Moses as a prophet – indeed the greatest of all the prophets. In a narrative in Numbers 12 in which Miriam and Aaron question Moses' special authority, an oracle makes it quite clear that Moses is unique among prophets in receiving his divine revelation 'mouth to mouth, clearly and not in dark speech' (RSV, v. 8). And Deuteronomy 34.10 proclaims that 'there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face' (RSV), and goes on to attribute all the signs and wonders he did in Egypt as related to his prophetic role.

Finally, in Moses' capacity as lawgiver, this prophetic role likewise comes to the fore. In the common Near Eastern background the giving of the law by the god is usually associated with a king, as it is in the case of Hammurabi of Babylon, but that is not the case for the Moses tradition. In the two presentations of the Sinai/Horeb theophany in J and D (Exod. 19–20; Deut. 5), the people are so terrified in witnessing the direct revelation and utterance of God that they beg Moses to serve as an intermediary to receive the words of God that they will then accept and obey. This serves as both an explanation of Moses' prophetic role and as a way of subsuming the whole of the legal tradition under prophecy and divine sanction. All of Moses' legal pronouncements become prophetic. At the same time it suggests that the law of Moses is the most complete prophetic revelation and that the later prophets are primarily commentary on the law.

It is, therefore, remarkable that so few direct references are made to Moses in the prophetic literature (Isa. 63.11–12; Jer. 15.1; Hos. 12.13; Mic. 6:4; Mal. 3.22), and all but one of these (Hos. 12.13) are late texts. The classical prophets of the period of the monarchy do not seem to base their moral or religious authority upon the Moses tradition. This led the great biblical scholar of the last century Julius Wellhausen to assert that in Israel's religious history the prophets came before Moses and the law, and not Moses before the prophets.

For all the biblical writers of the Pentateuch the wilderness period was the constitutional age, the time of Israel's beginning. Whatever was most fundamental to

Israelite society was deemed to have arisen in this period. And Moses as deliverer, leader, lawgiver and prophet, was regarded as the one through whom all this came about. In this sense he was the founder of the people of Israel. Modern criticism, however, has made the Moses tradition problematic by identifying its anachronisms and dating its materials to later ages. While some scholars have tried to find some elements of the tradition that may go back to Moses, there are those who dispute that any of it derives from Moses or the wilderness period.

MOSES IN POSTBIBLICAL JUDAISM

The great diversity within the religion of Judaism in the centuries that followed the Hebrew Bible does not allow one to generalize about the development of the Moses tradition in this period. But some common features are shared, even if understood somewhat differently, and may be set down as follows: (1) The legend of Moses continues to develop in the direction of the heroic, with many additional exploits about his youth and life in the Egyptian court. (2) The Law of Moses, the Torah, is gradually understood as encompassing the whole of the Pentateuch, so that Moses is author not just of the laws but also of the history from creation to the time of his own death. (3) Moses as the greatest prophet includes both his mediation of the law and the revelation of past history, including the origins of the world and the mysteries of the universe. (4) Moses' role as intercessor on Israel's behalf is expanded to reach beyond the limits of his death in the mitigation of divine punishment for the people's sins. Within the scope of these shared features are a number of special developments of the Moses tradition that may be briefly considered.

Moses in Hellenistic Judaism

During the period from 200 BCE to 100 CE Hellenistic Judaism took on a strongly apologetic character in response to a number of pagan writings that vilified Judaism and its founder Moses. In order to counteract this, Jewish writers presented their history and scriptures in ways that would appeal to Gentile audiences to win approval, or at least tolerance, for their religion and way of life. Moses was portrayed as a great inventor of the arts of civilization, including writing, philosophy, statesmanship, and religion. Moses' early life was modeled after the Hellenistic biography of the divine man, with prophecies about his birth and greatness, accounts of his beauty and royal upbringing, and his great military exploits on behalf of the pharaoh. All these embellishments were in answer to pagan attacks on the dubious character of Hebrew origins.

Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian living in Rome at the end of the first century CE, wrote his history of the Jewish people in the manner of Greco-Roman historiography. In it he greatly expands the early life and career of Moses with legends not found in the biblical tradition. For the rest, Moses as the Hebrew 'man of God' is assimilated to the Hellenistic 'divine man' and thus presented as legislator and founder of the ideal constitution – a theocracy. In this he is prior to, and exceeds in greatness, even Solon and Lycurgus among the Greeks (*Jewish Antiquities* 1.18–26; *Against Apion* 2.145–56, 164–6).

Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, who also lived in the first century CE, interpreted the Pentateuch according to Greek philosophical traditions and Jewish mystical religion. In his work *Life of Moses* Moses is presented as the ideal king of Hellenistic philosophy. This includes notions of the king as divine man, the embodiment of law and the chief priest of the nation. Moses' special qualities as divine man, his royal upbringing and his life as a shepherd prepare him to become the king of Israel in the wilderness period. Moses' role as legislator is presented as a royal function. According to Philo Moses is also a royal chief priest in his establishment of the institutions of worship and in his role as intercessor. Moses is likewise the greatest of the prophets, not only through his mediation of the law but in the character of his inspiration, which is a mystical experience of the divine and direct intuition of the truth. In some of his more philosophical and allegorical works, Philo describes Moses as the greatest of the philosophers (*On the Creation of the World*, 8–10) or as a hierophant with the Law as a guide to the divine mysteries (*On the Decalogue* 18; *Allegorical Interpretation* 3.173).

The apocalyptic tradition

In two apocalyptic works, the *Assumption of Moses* and *Jubilees*, Moses receives special and secret knowledge about both past and future events as well as heaven and hell, with special attention given to the events of the Last Days. Great emphasis is also placed on Moses' role as intercessor, not just in his lifetime, but beyond his death on Israel's behalf throughout their history up to the Last Judgment (*Jub.* 1.18–26; *Asm. Mos.* 1.14–18, 11.9–19).

Rabbinic view of Moses

The rabbinic tradition represents a vast array of sources from the second century CE to the Middle Ages, containing a wide spectrum of belief and opinion. In this it was heir to many of the impulses and developments in the Moses tradition noted above.

In the legal tradition (*halakhab*) Moses is the great 'teacher' who instructed Israel in the Law. This includes not only all the laws of the Pentateuch but all oral Torah, which was thought to have been handed down from Moses to Joshua and in succession ultimately to the rabbis. Thus all students of the law are really disciples of Moses.

The homiletic tradition (*aggadah*) highlighted other aspects of the Moses tradition that were a part of Jewish piety. It continued to embellish the legendary Moses as the 'man of God,' but also his role as the 'servant of God' in the people's liberation from slavery and guidance to the Promised Land. Moses' role as intercessor links him closely with his people, thereby ensuring their salvation in the final resurrection. Also as supreme prophet of the divine revelation he inaugurates the great succession of prophets.

MOSES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Throughout the New Testament Moses is viewed as the author of the Pentateuch ('Law': Mt 8.4, Mk 7.10; Jn 1.17), which serves not only as the definitive authority for the Jewish religion, but also as prophetic prediction for the rise of Christianity (Lk 24.25–7). At the same time the Law of Moses becomes increasingly associated with those forms of Judaism with which early Christianity came into conflict, so that the new revelation mediated through Jesus supersedes that of Moses.

In the Gospels, elements in the life of Jesus are modeled on the legends of Moses. In Matthew's infancy narrative (ch. 2), these include the predictions to the 'father' and warnings to the king, the slaughter of the innocents, the recognition of Jesus' royalty, and the flight into exile until the king's death.

Jesus forty days of fasting in the wilderness is parallel to Moses' fast on Mount Sinai (Mt 4.1–2; Lk 4.1–3; cf. Deut. 9.9) as well as Israel's forty years of trials in the wilderness. Jesus' feeding of the five thousand (Mt 14.13–21; Mk 6.32–44; Lk 9.10–17; Jn 6.1–14) is interpreted in John's Gospel as parallel to Moses giving manna in the wilderness (6.25–34). Jesus' appearance with Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration is reminiscent of the theophany at Sinai (Mt 17.1–8; Mk 9.2–8; Lk 9.28–36). Even the account of Jesus' ascension from the Mount of Olives has similarities with the legend of Moses' assumption on Mount Nebo (Lk 24.51; Acts 1.9–11).

The ministry of Jesus is likewise compared with that of Moses. In Matthew, the setting for the Sermon on the Mount is parallel to Moses expounding the law at Sinai. In Luke, Jesus is a prophet like Moses who redeems his people. For John, 'The law was given through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (REB, 1.17). In John's polemic against Judaism, Jesus is superior to Moses and supplants him as the divine revelation.

The apostle Paul, using the allegorical methods of Hellenistic Jewish exegesis, interprets the event at the Red Sea as a baptism 'into Moses' comparable to the Christian baptism 'into Christ' and the wilderness journey as a spiritual experience and therefore a model for the Christian life (1 Cor. 10:1–11). A similar instance of allegorical interpretation has to do with Moses' reception of the law and especially the veil that was used to cover the splendor of his face when he descended Mount Sinai (2 Cor. 3.7–18; cf. Exod. 34:29–35). Here the typology is intended to argue for the superiority of the manifested glory of the Christian gospel over the veiled religion of the Law of Moses in Judaism.

Likewise, the letter to the Hebrews draws comparisons between Jesus and Moses in order to argue that Jesus is superior. In the household of God, Moses as the servant of God is inferior to Jesus, who is the son of God (3.2–6; cf. Num. 12.7). Moses instituted the earthly sanctuary, which is only a copy and a shadow of the heavenly, and in this sanctuary the levitical priesthood ministers according to the law. But Jesus is the eternal high priest who ministers in the heavenly sanctuary by interceding for the faithful (8.1–6). In the same way Moses is the author of the old covenant, but this was only a preparation to be replaced by the new covenant through Jesus (8.7–10.18).

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CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

DAVID AND SOLOMON

—♦—
Gwilym H. Jones

David and Solomon were the only kings who ‘reigned over all Israel and Judah’ (2 Sam 5:5). The kingdom of their predecessor Saul was essentially formed by the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin and Gilead, with other tribes or areas associating themselves loosely and temporarily with them. It was less extensive territorially than the ‘empire’ of David and Solomon, and lacked the administrative and institutional framework established by them. But the united kingdom of David and Solomon did not survive beyond the death of Solomon, for when Rehoboam took the throne, the Israelites seceded and made Jeroboam king over them, creating two kingdoms, Judah in the south and Israel in the north (1 Kgs 12:20). Reconstructions of biblical chronology place the death of Solomon at various points between 922 and 932 BCE, and because biblical records quote the round figure of forty years for the kingship of both David and Solomon, exact dates cannot be determined. Their period was the early part of the tenth century BCE.

SOURCES

For this period the main sources are the books of Samuel and Kings; the approach of the books of Chronicles is thematic rather than chronological and corroborative evidence from external sources is scarce and fragmentary. The nature of historiography in these works needs definition. Undoubtedly the biblical books depended on basic source material, as is seen from a consideration of two extensive complexes. In 1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 5, eight narratives about the rise of David to power form a heterogeneous collection with many duplicates and parallels. Narratives that must at one time have existed independently have been brought together by an editor whose primary aim was to prove that David was the only legitimate successor of Saul. The thrust of the section is clearly theological: David was manifestly endowed with divine blessing, which had been withdrawn from Saul and transferred to his only true successor. Although it contains much material that interests the historian, it is undoubtedly a particular kind of history, a ‘theological history’.

Another complex, generally known as ‘the succession narrative’ (2 Sam 9–20; 1 Kgs 1–2) because of its concern with succession to David’s throne, has won acclamation as a reliable historical account that has emerged from David’s court and has

been described as the 'oldest specimen of ancient Israelite historical writing' (von Rad 1966). But doubts have been raised about the term 'historical writing'. Although much of the material is of interest to the historian, several of its most prominent features tell against the appropriateness of the term. Reports of private scenes, interest in the personal rather than political implications, lack of chronology and a distinctly pro-Solomonic *Tendenz* suggest a different kind of writing, which has been variously classified as historical novel, national epic or political propaganda. These complexes, used as source material for the period of David and Solomon, have a special character and are not 'history' in the strict sense of the word.

By now these traditions have been incorporated in a larger work known as the 'Deuteronomistic History' giving an account of Israelite history from the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34 to the exile at the end of 2 Kings, a period of 1,200 years. The dominant influence of Deuteronomy has given it its name and the history of the period is presented according to one line of interpretation. There are but few instances in which the Deuteronomists have undertaken extensive editorial reworking of the material in the two major complexes mentioned. But it is the Deuteronomists who have determined the general structure for presenting the material. In the case of David it is simply 'David under the blessing – David under the curse'; the same structure is used for Saul and Solomon (Carlson 1964). To uphold this scheme some chronological modifications were necessary.

DAVID'S RISE

David is presented as a charismatic person, and that is why he succeeded Saul. Two contrasting royal ideologies, charismatic kingship and hereditary dynasty, are seen in Israel's early traditions. Saul intended to establish a dynasty, with Jonathan as legitimate successor (1 Sam 20:31), but David and Jonathan did not subscribe to the hereditary dynasty principle (1 Sam 18:3; 20:13). However, when David was king he established a dynasty and was succeeded by Solomon. The dynasty survived among the southern tribes until the exile, but the northern tribes, immediately after Solomon's death, reverted to the charismatic ideal. There is evidence that on more than one occasion an attempt at founding a hereditary dynasty in the north floundered; this is the reason for the revolts against Nadab and Elah (1 Kgs 15:25–32; 16:8–14) and for Jehu's *coup d'état* and the fall of the house of Omri (2 Kgs 9:1 – 10:36) (see Alt 1968).

Traditions about David's introduction to Saul's court and his rise to power are dominated by one theme – the advance of David under divine guidance. The theme is supported by its counterpart, that Saul had lost divine favour and was no longer competent to rule. The main thrust of these intermingled traditions is that David was the legitimate successor. Different accounts of his introduction to court are concerned with legitimization. His anointing at Bethlehem by Samuel is strikingly similar to Saul's election: both were chosen (1 Sam 10:24; 16:8–10); one came from the smallest clan, the other was the youngest son; both were chosen through a process of elimination; both had to be sought and brought from elsewhere for the election. Although this narrative is probably secondary, having been deliberately constructed on the model of Saul's election, it makes the point that Saul was rejected

and abandoned to a malevolent spirit, while Yahweh's spirit was transferred to David (1 Sam 16:13). Another account of his admission to court reports how his skill in playing won him a place as armour-bearer (1 Sam 16:14–23), but it refers also to David's other attributes – his military prowess, good judgement, intellect and presence, all of which provide proof of divine blessing. By coming to court he gained training and experience and was thus able to replace Saul, despite the love–hate relationship between them (Gunn 1978, 1980). The third narrative, David's slaughter of Goliath (1 Sam 17:1–58), bears the marks of popular legendary material. It may originally have been connected with Elhanan before it became attached to David, and there is a glaring contradiction between verses 12–16 and 16:14–23. The narrative's aim is clear: it shows that God was with David, the youngster who refused armour and depended on a shepherd's sling. By conquering the Philistine he stood in the tradition of Israel's divinely endowed warriors. Whatever the origin of these often contradictory narratives, they have been placed together to support the theme that David, endowed with divine charisma, was Saul's legitimate successor.

Other sections of the narrative confirm that he was destined for the throne. Once in the court he was generally acclaimed by the populace and courtiers, and was elevated by Saul (1 Sam 18:1–5). Saul was torn between respect and hatred, but nevertheless gave David his daughter Michal to be his wife. It is shown that Saul, troubled by an evil spirit, was thwarted in all his plans, but that David was led by God to outstanding successes (1 Sam 18:14, 30). Particular significance is attached to Jonathan's friendship with David; the biblical words for their attachment, 'love' and 'covenant', signify some kind of political liaison (Thompson 1974). The pact sealed by them had political implications, and the handing over of Jonathan's clothes and armour to David was a symbolic transfer of the right of succession. Jonathan obviously recognized David as heir-apparent (Mettinger 1976).

Another important aspect of the theme is that David gained the throne lawfully and rejected all pressures and opportunities to usurp it. He respected Saul's position of 'the LORD's anointed', and twice spared his life (1 Sam 24:1–22; 26:1–25). He refused the opportunity in the cave in Engedi to take vengeance on Saul. Proof that he could have taken his life was his possession of a piece of his skirt. On another occasion his possession of Saul's spear and water jug (1 Sam 26:11, 16), one denoting his royal office and the other his life, showed that Saul's kingdom and life were in his hands. David restrained himself, and was careful not to be guilty for the death of Saul (1 Sam 29:1–11), Abner (2 Sam 3:28–39) or Ishbaal (2 Sam 4:9–12). The unmistakable inference of the biblical texts is that there are no grounds for taking David as an opportunist engaged in guerrilla warfare against Saul and a leader of bands of malcontents aiming at usurping the throne (as argued by Ishida 1977).

MILITARY SUCCESSES

David's popularity and rise to power is to a great measure attributed to his military prowess. His meeting with Goliath emphasized two important points: firstly, that David met the challenge not because of arrogance or a spirit of adventure but because he was chosen by God; secondly, that he stood in the tradition of Israel's

great warriors and, like Saul, triumphed over the Philistines. Despite Saul's endeavours to be rid of David by placing him in situations where he could easily fall into Philistine hands (1 Sam 18: 13, 17, 25), he survived. Eventually he had no option but to leave the court and escape, but it was not out of disloyalty: even as an outlaw, he was careful not to undermine Saul's status as God's anointed.

Nevertheless, during his absence from court David took steps, some of them morally questionable, to consolidate his own position. He secured the support of the priesthood at Nob (1 Sam 21:1–15; 22:6–23), although it was obtained through deception. The slaughter of the entire priesthood of Nob by Doeg the Edomite, who was in charge of Saul's servants, lost for Saul the service of the priesthood. But David had access to Yahweh through Abiathar, the only priest who escaped and then attached himself to David (1 Sam 23:6–13). Another act of deception obtained for David Goliath's sword, the possession of which had symbolic significance: it was a reminder of his success in battle, was an omen of future successes and possibly signified that power was transferred from the sanctuary to God's elect (Edelman 1991).

David's liberation of Keilah in Philistine territory further strengthened his position (1 Sam 23:1–29) and his activity in the wilderness of Maon led to an important acquisition of territory. Abigail intervened and prevented him from annihilating Nabal in retaliation for his refusal to give him provision and accepting his offer of peace and friendship. But it was through marrying Abigail after Nabal's death that he gained his Calebite territory, including Hebron, which became an important power base (2 Sam 2:1–4). He gained some territory too when he married Ahinoam of Jezreel (1 Sam 25:43).

During his sojourn of a year and four months with the Philistines at Gath David was engaged in morally indefensible activity (1 Sam 27:1–12). After escaping from Saul, he defected to the Philistines and after a period in the royal city with Achish he was given Ziklag, possibly as a reward for military assistance. Whether Ziklag is to be identified with Tell el-Khuweilfeh north of Beersheba or with Tell esh-Sherāh south-east of Gaza, it gave David a base that remained as crown-property of Judaeans kings.

From his base at Ziklag David made a series of attacks on Israel's enemies, the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites (1 Sam 27:8–12), who were on the route from Telam to Egypt. Giving Achish the impression that he was fighting enemies of the Philistines, David totally annihilated them leaving no trace of evidence to the contrary. An issue is not made of David's dishonesty; it is accepted that by conquering prospective enemies and amassing booty he was preparing for his kingship. Later David had to avenge Ziklag, the Negeb of the Cherethites, the Negeb of Caleb and some Judaeans territory. The most powerful town in the area was Hebron, and it was there that the people of Judah acclaimed him as their king (2 Sam 5:1–3).

Even when there was civil war between north and south, David had some support in the north. Two of his marriages, to Ahinoam of Jezreel and to Maacah daughter of Talmai of Geshur, were probably marriage alliances through which he gained support. He had also after the death of Saul made overtures to the men of Jabesh-gilead (2 Sam 5:46–7). Furthermore, a pact with Abner secured an understanding that Israelite territories would be transferred to David on condition that Saul's daughter Michal would return to him (2 Sam 3:6–21); he was obviously staking a

claim to Saul's throne. When Ishbaal died David took the throne without opposition and was acclaimed by 'the elders of Israel'. Following this there were further clashes with the Philistines (2 Sam 5:17–25), although the account has been chronologically misplaced in the Old Testament. On two occasions the Philistines came to the Valley of Rephaim to the south-west of Jerusalem. The first time David launched his attack from 'the stronghold' (probably Adullam) and defeated them at Baal-perazim. The second time he won a decisive victory and struck them from Geba (or better, following the LXX, Gibbeon, 6 miles north-west of Jerusalem) back to their border at Gezer.

A catalogue of David's victories in 2 Samuel 8:1–14 has probably been compiled from ancient fragments but has been arranged thematically rather than chronologically. Head of the list is his defeat of the Philistines, and despite a difficulty in identifying Metheg-ammah the implication is that he was in total control of Philistine territory. Moab was subjugated with great cruelty. In the north he faced a threat from Aram-zobah, which was expanding under Hadadezer, the leader of a strong coalition including Damascus and Hamath. David defeated Hadadezer, took prisoners and mutilated horses. The Aramaeans were conquered, and Hamath immediately sought an alliance with David. He also conquered Edom and placed garrisons there. This list indicates that David had taken control of Palestine from the Philistines, had placed garrisons in Moab, Edom and Ammon (corresponding to modern Jordan) and had conquered Aramaean states in the north (corresponding to modern Syria and eastern Lebanon). In view of these phenomenal successes, David was in control of what can be justifiably called an empire (Malamat 1958).

CAPITAL AND COURT

A significant conquest was the capture of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:6–9). Its name has been preserved in Egyptian execration texts of the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries BCE as well as in the Amarna texts of the fourteenth century BCE. The Israelites had not taken it when they entered Canaan (Josh 15:63; Judg 1:21), and it had remained an independent foreign enclave inhabited by Jebusites. David took a wise move by making it his capital: it was a strong fortress away from the main north–south routes, and it had a measure of independence because of its previous occupation by the Jebusites and its position more or less on the border between Israel and Judah.

The Jebusites were so confident in the strength of the city that they boasted that even handicapped people ('the blind and the lame') could defend it. When David took it he made the point that its defenders were indeed like handicapped people. The city was taken by making use of a vertical shaft from the city to the Spring of Gihon; David's men stopped the flow of water, either to enable them to climb the shaft into the city or to force the city into submission by cutting off the water supply. David took possession of the fortress on the hill in the south-eastern corner called 'the stronghold' or Ophel and renamed it 'the city of David'. He also strengthened the fortifications by building 'from the Millo inward'; the Millo was an earth-fill forming a rampart or a platform, which may have been a terracing on the eastern slope (Kenyon 1974).

Bringing the ark to Jerusalem added to the capital's stature. 2 Samuel 6:1–23 continues the story of the ark in 1 Samuel 4:1 – 7:1, but modern studies tend to discount the theory that they are to be read together as a continuous piece (Miller and Roberts 1977). Whatever its origin the narrative fits well in this particular context; it was after a decisive defeat of the Philistines that David was able to bring the ark to the city. Following Uzzah's cultic aberration, the ark was housed temporarily with Obed-edom, but after proof that it was a source of blessing David brought it to his capital. The cultic significance of the event is unmistakable: there were accompanying sacrifices; David wore a linen ephod, a priestly garment; a ram's horn summoned the people to the celebrations; a tent was constructed to house the ark. Ultimately the ark was placed in Solomon's Temple, and it is possible that the ark narratives served as sanctuary legends for the Jerusalem Temple (Timm 1966; Campbell 1975).

David set up a court in Jerusalem, and two variant lists of his officials have been preserved (2 Sam 8:15–18; 20:23–6); such lists were probably taken from archives. The first person named in both lists is Joab, commander of the army, who had been some time with David. Other officials common to both lists are Benaiah, who was in charge of the Cherethites and Pelethites, the royal bodyguard; Zadok and Abiathar, who shared the priesthood until David's death; Jehoshaphat, bearing the title 'recorder', sometimes translated 'herald', denoting the person responsible for communication between king and country (Mettinger 1971); Seraiah, secretary, possibly responsible for court annals or acting in a managerial capacity as Secretary of State. The second list names Adoram in charge of forced labour, a post probably created towards the end of David's reign. Another difference is that the reference to David's sons as priests has been replaced by the mention of Ira the Jairite. David had established a government in which a number of officials had responsibility for designated areas. It marks a shift from the informal arrangement of Saul to a more developed system of court officials under Solomon. Jerusalem had been established as a capital city with a royal court and a royal sanctuary.

SUCCESSION TO THE THRONE

An important issue in the biblical narrative is succession to David's throne. One section of Nathan's oracle (2 Sam 7:8–16) declares that God was going to found a dynasty (a 'house') for David and the eternity of his kingdom is asserted (Jones 1990). This is the main theme of 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2, reaching a climax with the statement that 'the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon' (2 Kgs 2:46). Lack of references to cultic matters, together with the absence of theological assertions about God's involvement in the events, have been taken as an indication that the succession narrative was a secular piece of writing. Nevertheless the point that Solomon was God's choice as successor is brought out clearly by a master of narrative art in action and dialogue rather than in explicit theological statements (Conroy 1978).

The editor may have seen in David's kindness to Mephibosheth, the last remaining son of Jonathan (2 Sam 9:1–13), some contribution to the theme of succession. Events surrounding Amnon's love for Tamar have a more direct bearing on the theme. Absalom's vengeance resulted in the death of Amnon and eventually of Absalom

himself, thus removing two of Solomon's older brothers. Both private affairs (2 Sam 13–14) and more public events (2 Sam 15–19), skilfully recorded without elaborating the point that Solomon was destined for the throne, were of great historical significance for the kingdom. Absalom's responsibility for the death of Amnon led to his exile from court, but after some time he was allowed to return to Jerusalem. Once reinstated he became a contender for the throne, moved by a desire for revenge for the wrong suffered by Tamar. However, despite the narrative's favourable attitude to David, other motives cannot be concealed; deficiencies in the administration of justice under David are noted (2 Sam 15:2–6), and there was possibly unease about his expansionist policy, his ruthless military activities and the development of state bureaucracy. Absalom had a following when he decided to stage his rebellion from Hebron, and when David withdrew from Jerusalem he took the city and arrogantly staked his claim to the throne by possessing his father's harem (2 Sam 16:21; Tsevat 1958). It was a short-lived rebellion. Absalom rejected Ahithophel's advice to follow a well-proven military strategy of launching a night attack, with a swift and successful action, and took Hushai's advice to take time to muster all Israel and to go himself to battle, a delay that gave David an opportunity to muster his troops. His men prevented David from going to battle, but Absalom was killed by Joab, who acted contrary to David's instructions to his commanders to deal gently with the rebel (2 Sam 18:5). By making this point and emphasizing that David had not gone to battle, it is shown that David could not be implicated in Absalom's death. Another point made is that David could rely on the assistance of past supporters of the house of Saul (2 Sam 17:27).

After a prolonged mourning for Absalom, David was persuaded to turn his attention to state matters. The dissatisfied elements who had supported Absalom were willing, after his death, to transfer their allegiance to David; what they found lacking in internal management was probably compensated by his success against the Philistines. David was prevented from immediate acceptance of Israelite overtures by Judah's tardiness in declaring its support. When that was obtained after approaches through the priests Zadok and Abiathar, Judah moved quickly and went to Gilgal to protect David's crossing of the Jordan. The spectacle of Judah leading the king to Jerusalem gave the Israelites a feeling of isolation and led to a conflict (2 Sam 19:41–3); this conflict between north and south was to lead to another rebellion (2 Sam 20) and ultimately to the division of the kingdom (1 Kgs 12).

Only two candidates for the throne remained, Adonijah and Solomon. When David showed signs of senility, Adonijah, the elder, set himself up as king with the support of Joab, commander of David's army, and Abiathar the priest (1 Kgs 1:6). An opposing party had the support of Zadok the priest, Benaiah, commander of David's bodyguards, Nathan the prophet, two unknown persons, Shimei and Rei, and some professional soldiers. On the one hand were representatives of the military and religious institutions of Hebron and the pre-Jerusalemite tradition; on the other were representatives of a new pattern emerging in Jerusalem with the monarchy. In answer to Adonijah's move, Bathsheba and Nathan organized a successful *coup d'état*, with Bathsheba probably taking a more active part in the plot than is attributed to her. By alluding to a fabricated oath, they obtained from David the designation of Solomon as his successor and arrangements were made for his immediate anointing

(1 Kgs 1:29–40). Initially Solomon acted as co-regent; after his acclamation Adonijah's contention collapsed, and when David died he progressed to the throne. Although Solomon granted amnesty to his rival, Adonijah took a false step by requesting Abishag the Shunammite as his wife; because it was interpreted as a claim to the throne Solomon was justified in putting him to death. Solomon further consolidated his position by removing Abiathar the priest to Anathoth and ordering the slaughter of Joab and Shimei. These narratives concerned with succession are suitably concluded with 1 Kings 2:46.

DAVID'S CHARACTER

The account of David's reign from the hands of the Deuteronomistic historians brings out their interest in a number of issues. David is represented as God's elect, who gained popularity and notable military successes. In his progress to the throne he showed remarkable restraint and did not seize it. Among his achievements were an extension of territory to reach the semblance of an empire; the establishment of the capital Jerusalem as cultic and administrative centre; the formation of a court structure with officials responsible for specific areas; an ultimate settlement of the succession issue by securing the throne for an offspring and thus fulfilling the prophecy that a house of David would be founded. However, the editors did not gloss over David's weaknesses and failures. His dishonesty on more than one occasion is frankly reported (1 Sam 21:1–6; 27:8–12), and no attempt has been made to hide acts of cruelty and atrocity (1 Sam 31:17; 2 Sam 8; 10:18). Although the succession issue was resolved, several incidents testify to David's weakness in his dealings with his own family: he failed to deal with Amnon and was unable to establish an effective relationship with Absalom. There is full coverage of his affair with Bathsheba and his despicable treatment of Uriah (2 Sam 11–12), and no attempt has been made to explain his behaviour, whether he acted from love, or lust, or because he wanted to reassert his flagging manhood (Cohen 1965). The story even admits that David's personal weaknesses were not without effect on the affairs of the kingdom (2 Sam 12:10–12).

SOLOMON

Solomon was Bathsheba's son, and it was with her assistance that he came to the throne. Although it has been argued that he was her firstborn, an illegitimate child, who had been given his name because he was a 'replacement' for Uriah her dead husband (Veijola 1979), it is more likely that he was her second son by David, a 'replacement' for the illegitimate firstborn who had died (2 Sam 12:24–5). His succession to David's throne as the result of a *coup d'état* called for the swift and decisive actions he took to consolidate his kingship. It also called for the legitimization of his kingship. The account of his visit to the sanctuary at Gibeon serves to declare that he was endowed with divine charisma. A parallel to this legitimization of royalty is found in the Egyptian 'royal novel' (*Königsnovelle*), such as the text on the Sphinx Stele recording a dream revelation to Thutmose IV (1421–1413 BCE). The salient features were: leaving the capital to sacrifice in a sanctuary; a

dream-vision; sacrificing and communicating the contents of the vision to members of the court (Herrmann 1953). The inclusion of this visit immediately after Solomon's accession suggests that his kingship needed justification.

WISDOM

According to the Gibeon narrative Solomon's charisma was 'wisdom', which has become a leading motif in the chapters covering his reign because it was probably the dominant theme of their source, 'the book of the acts of Solomon' (Liver 1967). His request for 'an understanding mind' was granted, and the theme recurs in 1 Kings 3:16–4:34 and again in 1 Kings 10:1–10, 13, 23–4. His original quest was for 'an understanding mind *to govern* your people', and although the Hebrew *šāpaʿ* translated 'to govern' basically means 'to judge', it must not be given a narrow juridical meaning; Solomon was asking for the ability to decide between right and wrong in governing the people (Mettinger 1971). In its treatment of wisdom the narrative brings out the juridical connotation by placing 1 Kings 3:16–28 immediately after the Gibeon visit. Because of the numerous parallels to this particular section, some from as far as East Asia and India, it seems to be popular folk tradition, and may have come to the Jerusalem court circle and was attached to the Solomonic tradition after suitable modification. Its inclusion has given a narrow interpretation to Solomon's ability to govern.

A different definition of wisdom is that it is the possession of a 'breadth of understanding' surpassing the understanding of all other people (1 Kgs 4:29–34). The addition of verses 31–3 gives it a narrower interpretation – the ability to compose proverbs and poetry and also to produce scientific lists of natural phenomena or nature-wisdom. Many have cast doubt on the reliability of this tradition, and these three verses, together with 1 Kings 10:1–10, 13, 23–4, have been labelled as late and legendary. These arguments, however, are not conclusive. It is not improbable that Solomon's court developed a wisdom tradition on a model already established in Egypt. Indeed wisdom schools were known in Babylon, Egypt and Ugarit, and it is not unlikely that a similar school was established in Jerusalem (Mettinger 1971); the connection with Solomon may have been imposed later on a tradition that belonged to his court circle.

The wisdom theme reaches its climax with the visit of the queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:1–10, 13, 23–4), which originated from popular, legendary material similar to that extensively used in the Middle East and elsewhere (Ullendorf 1962–3; 1974). Two aspects of Solomon's wisdom are brought together – the wisdom of his administration and his ability to answer hard questions. Originally the visit was a trade mission, but became attached later to the wisdom tradition. Because of the great distance from the South Arabian kingdom of Sheba, which controlled the trade route between India, East Africa and the Mediterranean, and the lack of direct evidence that the country had been governed by a queen, it is more probable that the visitor came from the land of the Sabeans in North Arabia. It was not too distant from Jerusalem and is frequently mentioned in the royal annals of Tiglath-pileser III (ANET 283–6). Because the Sabeans were in control of the northern sections of the trade routes from South Arabia, this visit was unquestionably a trade mission.

Both the similarity between Solomon's Gibeon visit and the Egyptian *Königsnovelle* and the many subsequent references to his wisdom point to Egyptian influence on his court. Solomon seems to have deliberately modelled aspects of the Hebrew monarchy on Egyptian protocol.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Pronounced Egyptian influence on the Jerusalem court was due to Solomon's marriage alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, an alliance probably contracted early in his reign and possibly initiated by David. Marriage between a pharaoh's daughter and a foreigner was rare and even prohibited in early times; according to Amenophis III 'no daughter of the king of Egypt is given to others' (Schulman 1979). But because of the close friendship between Egypt and the Davidic-Solomonic empire a marriage alliance would not be unlikely (Malamat 1958); the pharaoh in question would probably be one of the last of the Twenty-first Dynasty, either Siamun (978–959 BCE) or Psusennes II (959–945 BCE).

Alliance with Egypt brought with it commercial advantages, as is obvious from the short business memorandum preserved in 1 Kings 10:28–9. Several interpretations of this difficult text have been proposed (Tadmor 1961), but with some reinterpretation it becomes obvious that Solomon had control of the trade passing through his land and derived financial benefits from it. Cilicia was the source of the best horses and the Egyptians built the best chariots; Solomon obtained horses from Cilicia (Kue in v. 29, and deleting 'Egypt') for 150 shekels and chariots from Egypt for four times the price. His merchants controlled the trade between Syria and Egypt, supplying horses to Egypt and chariots to Syria at a standard rate of four horses for one chariot. Such transactions brought financial benefits.

Another advantageous alliance promoted by Solomon was with Hiram King of Tyre, who is not to be confused with the Tyrian craftsman of the same name (1 Kgs 7:13, 40). The political alliance between the two countries since the time of David was beneficial for both. Israel, being on a bridge between north and south, could take advantage of a maritime power like Phoenicia. It was in Tyre's interest to be in alliance with Israel because it controlled the King's Highway through Transjordan and could protect Tyre's hinterland to the east (Fensham 1969). In response to Hiram's initiative, Solomon made his request for cedars from Lebanon to be cut by the Sidonians (1 Kgs 5:6); they had great experience in the craft as is testified by the Palmero Stone inscription referring to a delivery of timber to Egypt 400 years previously (Ap-Thomas 1973). When accepting the proposal, Hiram made two important modifications: firstly, Hiram would take full responsibility for lumbering and transporting the timber to the coast of Palestine, thus preventing Solomon's men from entering Phoenicia and participating in the sea operations; secondly, instead of paying wages to Hiram's men and therefore exercising some control over them, Solomon was to make a block payment to Hiram by supplying food for his household.

A closer co-operation between Hiram's men and Solomon's men is envisaged in their trading activities from Ezion-geber. The two references to trade with Ophir are to be taken together (1 Kgs 9:26–8; 10:11–12). Ezion-geber is to be identified

with harbour installations in the bay of Gazirat al-Far'un on the Gulf of Aqaba. By co-operating with Solomon the Phoenicians had the advantage of a trading port with Ophir and were also given an opportunity to break Egypt's monopoly of transit trade (Yeivin 1959–60). Solomon had assistance from the Phoenicians in building and sailing ships, and he had an important trading port to make up for his lack of a port on the Mediterranean. Solomon acquired wealth from these trading enterprises. Taxation on the merchandise was paid to him as controller of trade routes (1 Kgs 10:15). The 'kings of Arabia', who also contributed to his income, were probably merchant princes or sheiks. More wealth was obtained from ships trading from port to port; 'ships of Tarshish' were probably large seagoing vessels and not a fleet connected with any particular place (Hoenig 1979). A list in 1 Kings 10:22 may suggest that they went up the coast as far as India.

Other marriages were contracted by Solomon. A reference to them in a thoroughly Deuteronomistic passage sees foreign alliances as an evil influence, inclining Solomon's heart to follow their gods (1 Kgs 11:1–4). The original notice was probably very brief and listed political marriages with Solomon's immediate neighbours, beginning with three in the east (Moab, Ammon, Edom), three on the coast to the north-west (Sidonians or Phoenicians) and finally the inhabitants of Syria in the north-east (the Hittites). Marriages contracted by kings must be seen against the background of negotiations and treaties with other foreign powers (Malamat 1965). Solomon consolidated the empire by pursuing diplomatic relations with neighbouring powers and reaped benefits from trade and commerce.

BUILDING PROJECTS

Peace in his time gave Solomon an opportunity to undertake large building enterprises. Solomon's Temple and its furnishings are described in detail (1 Kgs 6; 7:13–51; 8). But it has to be admitted that some later modifications to the shrine, including repairs and renovations have found their way into the report. Nevertheless, its plan is clear: it had a tripartite structure, with an entrance hall, a nave and an inner shrine. Similar structures have been found in Egypt, Assyria and Philistia (Busink 1970), but similar Syro-Phoenician temples are more likely to have provided Solomon with a model, for it was from there that he hired his craftsmen. A replica, with an entrance hall, two pillars in front, a cella and a raised shrine, is found in a ninth-century temple at Tell Ta'inat in northern Syria, but it has different dimensions. Another parallel is the temple of Tell-chuera in north-east Syria. However, some features of Solomon's Temple have parallels in the Canaanite cities excavated at Shechem, Megiddo and Hazor. It seems likely that Solomon had taken over an old Jebusite shrine on the site, and in renovating it introduced some Phoenician elements (Rupprecht 1977). The details of structure, masonry, timber, bronze and gold furnishings in the text can be pursued with the aid of a commentary. Although annexed to the palace complex, and smaller than some of these buildings, the Temple was more than a private royal chapel, but was built primarily to house the ark and to be a centre of worship for all Israel.

Details of Solomon's private and secular buildings are more scant, and no exact information is given about their relationship to one another or their location (1 Kgs

7:1–12). It is assumed that, like the Temple, they were situated on the eastern hill and stood to the south of the Temple itself; they may have been more extensive than the biblical list suggests, since palace complexes in the ancient East, as is testified in Mari, covered a vast area. The House of the Forest of Lebanon, so named because of the use of cedar inside the building, was larger than the Temple and had three storeys and chambers. It was probably an armoury for keeping shields and weapons (see 1 Kgs 10:17; Is 22:8), but the exact form of the building is difficult to envisage. Because the length of the Hall of Pillars corresponded to the breadth of the House of the Forest of Lebanon, the Hall may have formed a portico for the House, and possibly there stood a vestibule with pillars and cornice in front of the portico (1 Kgs 7:6). Another building within the complex was the Hall of the Throne, which is also called the Hall of Judgment; it was reserved for the royal throne, for the king was the dispenser of justice (Whitelam 1979). Public buildings were separate from the royal apartments; the former were probably to the east of the Hall of the Throne and the latter to the west behind the throne. The private apartments were ‘his own house where he was to dwell’ and the house made for Pharaoh’s daughter, which may have been built on an Egyptian model with a covered hall rather than an open courtyard.

Building lists were common in the ancient East, and several have been found among royal inscriptions. Probably, therefore, an old archival list lies behind the note about the cities fortified by Solomon (1 Kgs 9:15–19). After mentioning the Millo in Jerusalem, which is most difficult to identify or locate, these verses list six towns that form a line running from north to south. Archaeological excavations have shown that his building works outside Jerusalem were more important than the impression given in the Bible. Evidence of Solomon’s rebuilding of Canaanite towns is available in the complex city-gate and elaborate system of casemate city walls at Megiddo, and again in similar gates at Beth-shemesh, Debir, Hazor, Gezer, Dan and Beersheba (Kenyon 1971). Another building not mentioned in the biblical list was the Solomonic temple at Arad (Aharoni 1968). The list at the end becomes more general and refers to store-cities, depots for keeping provisions, and cities for chariots and horsemen, which were military bases.

ADMINISTRATION

The queen of Sheba was impressed by Solomon’s administration (1 Kgs 10:9). Court officials and their dependants constituted a significant element in the population of Judah. It has been reckoned that the royal family, court officials and other ancillary staff numbered 1,600, and that the household members of court personnel added another 4,000 to the total (Ishida 1977). The list of court officials (1 Kgs 4:1–6), as would be expected, shows some continuity with the list of David’s officials. Azariah had by now succeeded his father Zadok as priest; the mention of Zadok and Abiathar in verse 4 is unnecessary and is probably an erroneous continuation from the Davidic lists. A development from the Davidic period is the mention of two secretaries, one possibly managing internal business and the other dealing with foreign correspondence. Two sons of Nathan are listed: Azariah, in charge of district prefects, a post that was Solomon’s innovation; Zabud, ‘king’s friend’ or counsellor. Another office

appearing for the first time was held by Ahishar, who was 'in charge of the palace', a post that gave him authority over royal property (Mettinger 1976). The last name on the list is Adoniram in charge of 'forced labour', a post first mentioned in the time of David.

To provide food for the royal household Solomon divided the land into twelve administrative districts under the supervision of a prefect or district governor; each district was to provide food for the royal household for one month each year (1 Kgs 4:7–19). Although the list is more interested in giving the name of each prefect than in defining exactly the geographical boundaries of the districts, there must have been a connection between the districts and the old Israelite tribal system. The geographical extent of some districts and the retention of their former names proves a dependance on the earlier system. But it was also modified, and the names of Canaanite towns have been given in some regions (vv. 9–14). Modification was necessary because Canaanite regions had been added to the kingdom of David (Aharoni 1966). The list belongs to the second half of Solomon's reign, after the transfer of cities in the plain of Acco to Hiram of Tyre (1 Kgs 9:11–13), and confirms that Solomon followed the common practice of establishing a fiscal system. Similar lists based on a division of the population have been found in Ras Shamra, among Neo-Babylonian and Persian cuneiform inscriptions and in the list of towns and officials providing for Sheshonk I of Egypt (Dougherty 1925; Redford 1972).

In addition to financial provision, Solomon's building projects depended on a strong body of labourers. Forced labour is known from Mesopotamia and Egypt as well as Syria–Palestine. An Amarna letter from Megiddo and the Alalakh letters refer to the wages of *corvée* men and use a linguistically related word to the Hebrew *mas* – 'forced labour' (Mendelsohn 1962). There is an apparent discrepancy in the biblical record: whereas 1 Kings 5:13 states that he 'conscripted forced labour out of all Israel', 1 Kings 9:20–2 suggests that only non-Israelites were conscripted. The contradiction can be resolved if two different kinds of forced labour are envisaged. The 'forced levy of slaves' (1 Kgs 9:20–2) refers to a permanent *corvée* involving serfdom to the state to which the Canaanites were subjected; they were mainly engaged on Solomon's fortifications. But the 'forced labour' of 1 Kings 5:13–16 was a temporary conscription not involving serfdom and was imposed on Israelites, that is, the northern tribes; they gave a service of three months a year to assist Solomon more specifically with the Temple and the palace. Although the high numbers of Solomon's labourers quoted in 1 Kings 5:15–16 are unrealistically exaggerated, there is no doubt that Solomon's building projects called for great administrative skill to raise finances and to secure a labour force.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Solomon's reign was not beleaguered by the demands of military action, as had been the case in David's time. He was thus able to enter into a peaceful relationship with neighbouring powers. A period of calm made it possible for him to launch major building projects, and gave his court an opportunity to take an interest in wisdom, learning and historical writing, an interest that is sometimes called 'the Solomonic enlightenment'.

However, it was not a period of unsullied success. Solomon's fiscal and labour policies laid heavy burdens on the people. He was unable to pay Hiram of Tyre for labour and material, and had to offer him territories and twenty towns in Galilee between Haifa and Acco in payment of his debt (1 Kgs 9:10–14). Dissatisfaction in the northern districts of Syria acquired by David led to a strike for independence under the leadership of Rezon (1 Kgs 11:23–5). Forced labour was not acceptable to the Israelites in the north (1 Kgs 12:4), and because of unwillingness to address the problem the kingdom was divided after Solomon's death.

According to 1 Kings 11 one result of Solomon's marriage alliances was syncretism. For the Deuteronomists this was an unpardonable evil and a reason for tearing away the kingdom from him. Although this is a highly theological verdict on Solomon, it cannot be doubted that some of his actions did alienate the population. In the construction of the Temple there was a clash between Solomon and the old tribal tradition of Israel. The ark, which symbolized God's presence and was of utmost importance for the faith of the Israelite tribes, was brought to the Temple by 'the elders of Israel' (1 Kgs 8:1–13). Apparently Solomon's part in this action was minimal, for he was more interested in the cherubim, an old Canaanite symbol. Such syncretistic tendencies fuelled discontent, and no doubt contributed to the disruption of the monarchy.

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CHAPTER FORTY

JESUS



Robert Morgan

INTRODUCTION

The phrase 'biblical world' suggests the geographical, social, and cultural settings of Israelite and Jewish history over more than a thousand years and points back behind the conquest of Canaan into the mists of undocumented time. That *historical* reference draws into the field of vision neighbouring states and world powers that came into contact, usually unfriendly, with this ancient people. But the phrase also refers to a stranger, less definable 'world' evoked by the biblical texts. Even if they did not constitute the Christian canon(s) of scripture and include that of the parent religion, these texts would generate a *symbolic* world in which human life finds its meaning in a context that transcends the historical world. The canonical status of this *religious* classic only reinforces the concerns that are prominent in the composition, transmission, and reception of the Bible. Treating this literature purely as ancient history is therefore unlikely to yield adequate interpretations. Historical research is indispensable in the modern critical discussion of any ancient literature, but the gulf between a purely historical interest and what these sources are aiming at needs to be acknowledged at the outset.

The oddities and limitations of the biblical sources pose obvious problems for the historian of the earlier periods. Prior to Saul and David the scanty data consist more of myth, saga and legend than historically reliable traditions. More surprisingly, there are similar problems in knowing about Jesus, even though the sources stand at no great distance from their subject matter. Not until Paul do we have primary sources about Christian origins. The public activity and execution of Jesus were barely two or three generations past when the New Testament gospels were written and his words, deeds, and destiny were remembered and re-enacted in the circles where the gospels took shape. Nevertheless, these four narratives pose special difficulties for modern readers sensitive to the gulf between the biblical world and their own intellectual and cultural contexts.

The novel second-century description of the relevant texts as 'gospels' hints at the difficulty of classifying them generically. It was not merely the curious circumstances of the birth of Jesus as related by two of them, nor even the more mysterious events said to have followed his death, that made these narratives different and special to those who composed them and to the communities that treasured them. It was what

generated these peculiar testimonies that led their authors to write no ordinary ‘lives’ or histories, and their readers finally to settle on the new generic label ‘gospel’: the unique religious status of the character they render.

If the extraordinary fact of the early Christians’ religious veneration of Jesus has led to the production of some not easily classifiable texts, the subsequent history of that religious movement has further conditioned their reception. Both the triumphant expansion of Christianity and its relative decline in the modern and pluralistic West have decisively affected how these texts have been read. People’s images of Jesus have varied accordingly.

Christian readers and hearers have typically taken the gospel story at its face value, unconsciously synthesizing and harmonizing the four accounts, and mostly disregarding any elements that fitted badly into their own religious world-views. Until recently they have come to the gospels with faith-pictures of the earthly Jesus set in a doctrinal framework drawn mainly from Paul and John as interpreted by the subsequent Christian tradition and refracting the colours of their own non-Jewish contexts. Today Jesus remains a cultural icon reaching far beyond the circles that find in him the revelation of God. A typical outline of Jesus as generally remembered would be based mainly on Matthew and Luke, reinforced by Christian art. The gospel story encapsulated in that sketch includes the Christmas story and the baptism of Jesus by John; his temptations in the wilderness; his ministry of preaching and teaching (especially in parables) and healing; his choice of twelve disciples and sending them out on a mission; perhaps some nature miracles and a transfiguration; his prophecies of his own sufferings, death, and resurrection, and future coming as Son of Man at the end of the age; his dramatic entry into Jerusalem and cleansing of the Temple; controversies with scribes and Pharisees; his last supper with his disciples, prayer in Gethsemane, betrayal, arrest, trials, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Its beginning and end have long been widely admitted to contain more symbolic than historical elements, and some of the miracle stories are similarly interpreted, but this gospel story is still widely accepted as broadly historical as well as containing and communicating religious and moral truth.

This modern picture is more recognizably human than the subtly dogmatic vision of Christ’s glory projected by the gospel according to St John, and that is partly the effect of a two to three hundred years’ project to investigate Jesus of Nazareth by the same methods and with the same assumptions that historians approach other documented portions of the human past. In the eighteenth century a few enlightened thinkers in Europe opened the door to modern historical study of the Bible by challenging the doctrinal assumptions, Protestant and Roman Catholic, that had guided the study of scripture for centuries. Their liberation from the incredible beliefs of an intolerant religious culture has been adopted by many twentieth-century readers of the Bible, both inside and outside the churches. This project of ‘free investigation’ has proved sufficiently persuasive to control the presentation that follows. But history alone has never been more than a minority interest among attentive listeners and serious students of the Bible. Alternative perspectives that do better justice to its religious power are also appropriate.

The New Testament portraits of Jesus reflect and communicate how he was understood in the decades following his death. Dr Williams discusses that in [chapter 44](#)

of this volume. The focus of the present chapter is the man himself, but the religious evaluations later summed up in the doctrinal definition 'truly God, truly a human' have put some pressure on enquirers to position themselves with respect to this man and the community of his followers who make such an imposing claim. Whether or not one shares their belief it is hard to avoid its influence.

The tangle of historical, cultural, and religious interests surrounding the modern study of Jesus can be initially sorted by reviewing the modern historical questioning that continues to define the issues. Retracing the arguments and recapturing the pressures exerted on traditional Christianity by modern critical rationality throws light on the perplexities thoughtful readers of the gospels often experience. It will in addition introduce the methods by which scholars have reached their own conclusions about Jesus. They have lifted information about him out of its interpretative frameworks in the gospel sources and interpreted it afresh. Historians and historically sensitive theologians have established points of general agreement and areas of uncertainty and disagreement. Some knowledge of this debate may also suggest limitations to this way of entering the biblical world and so invite attention to other perspectives from which the gospels and their elusive subject matter may be pondered, including the Bible's own theological perspectives.

FROM REIMARUS TO BORNKAMM

It has become conventional to follow Albert Schweitzer in making H. S. Reimarus (1694–1768) the start of the modern historical study of Jesus and to follow the English translation (1910) of Schweitzer's survey *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (1906) in calling it 'The quest of the historical Jesus'. Reimarus had learned much from the English Deists' criticism of revealed religion but was the first to offer a coherent historical explanation 'concerning the intentions of Jesus and his disciples' (Talbert 1970).

That was the title of the seventh 'Fragment of an unnamed author', which Lessing excerpted from a copy of the complete manuscript and published in 1778, evading the censor and concealing its authorship. He had already dared to publish Reimarus's section 'On the Resurrection Narratives' the previous year. This sixth fragment (Talbert 1970: 153–200) exposed some of the contradictions in the gospel accounts and undermined belief in their historicity, casting doubt on Matthew's improbable story of the guard at the tomb. The more important suggestion of the seventh and final fragment (the censor then intervened) was that the intentions of the apostles were quite different from those of Jesus. The latter had been a political Messiah or worldly deliverer (and also an enlightened moral teacher) who had evidently meant by his undefined phrase 'the kingdom of God' what his Jewish hearers would have understood by it. He remained entirely within Judaism and celebrated his final Passover in the hope of coming again soon in clouds of glory (122). The command to disciple all gentiles and baptize them in the threefold name (Mt 28.19) is not historical, argued Reimarus. When Jesus failed and was executed, the disciples faced ridicule and danger. Their solution was to steal the body, claiming God had raised him from the dead, and to rewrite his teachings, making him claim to be a spiritual Messiah who must die to obtain forgiveness for humanity and then be raised

(151). They also twisted Old Testament texts to support their case with arguments from prophecy, and they claimed that the world would soon end and that anyone who failed to accept their preaching would be damned. However, their rewrite was not fully consistent, and there ‘peeps out a worldly deliverer’ (147). The end of the world did not come and the modern rationalist critic can see how the evangelists misinterpreted their old scriptures and concocted new ones. The way is thus now open for a modern, scientific, non-miraculous account of Jesus and Christian origins.

Reimarus’s fraud hypothesis gains some initial plausibility from the surely fictitious story of the Roman guard at the tomb, but loses this when it is recognized that Matthew’s gospel was not written soon after the crucifixion or by one of the apostles. The actual historical reconstruction of Reimarus has therefore found few followers, though many have subsequently doubted the historical reliability of particular resurrection traditions. That justifiable scepticism does not require the fraud hypothesis and is compatible with Christians’ accepting these stories’ witness to God’s having vindicated Jesus. But in almost every other respect Reimarus may be said to have anticipated twentieth-century gospel criticism. A hundred and fifty years later Schweitzer admired him for recognizing the importance of eschatology, or sayings about the end of the world in the gospels – even though he thought that Reimarus was mistaken in attributing to Jesus political aspirations. Schweitzer attributed to Jesus himself the expectation of an imminent end to the world, an expectation Reimarus thought the disciples had concocted after Jesus’ death.

Today opinion remains divided and many would agree with Reimarus in attributing the expectation of an imminent end of the world to the early church, not to Jesus. However, they would attribute it to the disciples’ conviction about Jesus’ vindication by God and the activity of God’s Spirit among them rather than to any cynical and self-serving fraudulence. But even more important than Reimarus’s eschatology was his recognition that the historical truth about Jesus must be gleaned from between the lines of gospels that tell a rather different story. However wrong Reimarus may have been in associating Jesus with attempted liberation from the Romans he was entirely right to see him in the social and political context of first-century Palestinian Judaism, and to distinguish that from the early church’s theological frame of reference projected by the gospels. The historian must interpret the phrases ‘Son of God’ and ‘kingdom of God’ from within that Jewish context, not in the light of later credal formulations, and must consider how far the gospel records have already been coloured by post-resurrection beliefs about Jesus.

Lessing’s *Fragments of an Unnamed Author* caused a stir among intellectuals without greatly disturbing church or society. That larger shock, which gospel criticism had in store for Christian Europe, was administered by a 27-year old Tübingen tutor: David Friedrich Strauss whose *Life of Jesus* appeared in 1835, marking an epoch in biblical studies and in European religious thought (ET by George Eliot, 1846).

It was not in fact a life of Jesus, and it contained little that was entirely new. It was rather a criticism of the gospel narratives designed to show that they are largely unhistorical, and its impact was cumulative and inescapable. As Reimarus had drawn attention to the contradictions in the resurrection narratives and denied their historicity, so Strauss worked methodically through the whole gospel story from the annunciation to the ascension, remorselessly exposing the contradictions between the

four accounts and the implausibility of harmonizations and the inadequacy of previous modes of explanation. He was frank about his incredulity, as a modern man who knew about laws of nature, when confronted with narratives of miracles, or angels, demons, voices from heaven or anything else supernatural. And he was scathing about the absurdities of scholars who tried to preserve a historical core to all these individual stories while discarding their supernatural elements. He had an alternative explanation, which was to recognize the entirely 'mythical' character of many of the stories in the gospels. They are not accurate or even inaccurate reporting by eyewitnesses but the product of the mythopoetic imagination of the first followers of Jesus passed on orally in the early church. Convinced that he was the Messiah, and persuaded by visions that God had vindicated him, they naturally told stories about him based on Old Testament prototypes, notably Moses, Elijah, and Elisha.

A brilliant introduction explained 'the development of the mythical point of view in relation to the gospel histories' from Greek allegorizers to modern rationalists, and also the application of the mythical mode of interpretation first to the Old Testament and to the beginning and end of the gospel story. Strauss showed how the new approach stems from a knowledge of and comparison with cultures other than one's own, and how it is compatible with a proper understanding of religion as the perception of truth, not in the form of an idea, which is the philosophical perception, but invested with imagery (80). Finally his introduction offered 'criteria by which to distinguish the unhistorical in the gospel narrative' (88) by analogy with one's own experience, and by noting contradictions, poetical form, and mythical or doctrinal content – difficult though it admittedly is to draw the boundaries with precision.

Strauss labelled many of the individual stories in the gospels 'myth'. These interpreted Jesus as at once human and divine, and are not a historical record. He excluded from the realm of historical causation everything miraculous or supernatural, while accepting that Jesus no doubt performed (faith) healings. He judged the synoptic picture generally more historical than the Johannine, reversing the traditional preference for John, which had still been maintained by Schleiermacher in 1821 and remained dominant much longer in England. Although Strauss did not write a proper life of Jesus until 1864 his earlier judgments concerning what is probably historical imply a picture of the 'historical Jesus' not very different from what many scholars and popularizers would accept today.

This powerful historical criticism of the gospels echoed and shaped a growing consensus, whereas Strauss's ultra-Hegelian reinterpretation of Christianity in terms of the 'idea' of the unity of the divine and the human in the human race (rather than in the person of the Incarnate Son), which the mythic stories were intended to express, found almost no support. Christians were generally clear that their faith referred to Jesus himself as the revelation of God, and Strauss's attack on the gospels as historical sources led to the more rigorous 'quest for the historical Jesus' that followed. It was hoped that identification by source criticism of the earlier strata of the synoptic gospels (early Mark and the hypothetical collection of sayings apparently used by Matthew and Luke, later called 'Q') would yield a reliable account of Jesus' ministry, his teaching and death (Holtzmann 1863). Strauss himself continued to think Matthew the oldest gospel, but as the material it contains includes both

Mark and 'Q' his *Life of Jesus for the German People* (1864) was not very different from the flood of liberal lives of Jesus built from those earlier sources. The most popular of these were E. Renan's *Life of Jesus* (1863), brilliantly lampooned in Schweitzer's *Quest*, and Harnack's lectures on the essence of Christianity (1900), which celebrated the gospel *of* (not *about*) Jesus concerning the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the unique value of each human soul.

But the axe was already at the root of all these modernizing reconstructions. A theological critique of the quest of the 'so-called historical Jesus' had been ignited by Martin Kähler in 1892 and would explode a generation later. More visibly, and also in 1892, Johannes Weiss had claimed in *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* that Jesus did not mean by that phrase what theologians impressed by Kant had thought. Influenced by some Jewish apocalypses (especially the book of *Enoch*), which had been rediscovered in the nineteenth century, Weiss argued that the kingdom of God was for Jesus not an ethical ideal to be brought about by human effort, but an apocalyptic-eschatological transformation soon to be brought about by God. In 'moments of prophetic vision' Jesus even 'perceived the opposing kingdom of Satan as already overcome and broken' and 'at such moments as these he declared with daring faith that the Kingdom of God had actually already dawned' (129).

A less nuanced presentation of Jesus as an apocalyptic visionary (or deluded fanatic) was sketched by Albert Schweitzer in 1901 and argued for in the *Quest* (1906) through a scintillating critique of his predecessors. This Jesus was very different from Harnack's moral and religious teacher, but at least Schweitzer agreed that Jesus could be correctly and adequately understood by historical research. His German title, on the other hand, and a climactic chapter contrasting Wrede's 'thoroughgoing scepticism' with his own 'thoroughgoing eschatology', signal the development of subsequent scholarship that was to undercut both his own and the liberal portraits. Kähler (1892) could be ignored in 1906; Wrede's *Messianic Secret* could not. Schweitzer tried to force a choice between his own eschatological Jesus and Wrede's scepticism about the historical reliability of the gospel traditions. Twentieth-century scholars were to learn from both.

Wrede's dense monograph gave a further twist to Reimarus's claim that Jesus himself was very different from early Christian belief about him, but whereas Reimarus saw Jesus as a political Messiah Wrede doubted the messianic character of the ministry. Led partly by Romans 1.4 and Acts 2.36 and especially Mark 9.9 ('tell no-one until the Son of Man rises from the dead') he suggested that belief in Jesus as Messiah dated from the resurrection. Mark's reports of Jesus' injunctions to silence are sometimes implausible. Wrede saw these and the reported blindness of the disciples, and the improbable theory about parables (4.10-12), as all the product of a tension between the Jesus of history and early Christian belief. The theory has been much modified and sometimes rejected, but Wrede's history of traditions' method, with its strong sense of the gulf between the gospels and Jesus, came to dominate twentieth-century research. The gospels contain biographical material but are also religious propaganda and advocate views probably not made explicit (or perhaps not even shared) by Jesus himself.

This new interest in the shaping of the traditions of Jesus' sayings and doings prior to the composition of the gospels led to the 'form criticism' (or history of the

literary forms in which the record was preserved) of Dibelius (1919) and Bultmann (1921). Like Strauss's classic on the gospel traditions (1835) Bultmann's *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (i.e. prehistory of the first three gospels) posited dramatic developments during the period of oral transmission of the tradition. The book owed much of its impact to its success in synthesizing the previous generation's probings: Jülicher on the parables, J. Weiss on eschatology and on form criticism, Wrede on the possibly non-messianic ministry of Jesus, Wellhausen's dissection of the gospel traditions, Bousset on the early Hellenistic church, K. L. Schmidt's dissolution of the framework of the gospels (1919), history of religions parallels from Judaism and paganism, are all presented in Bultmann's methodical analysis of the synoptic material. Form criticism soon dominated German research and by the 1960s was more widely accepted, including by a revitalized Roman Catholic scholarship. The history of traditions approach had undermined the older 'lives of Jesus', but broad agreement about earlier and later strata, and about the criteria for distinguishing more and less reliable traditions had reduced the area of scholarly disagreement to manageable proportions.

How much of the gospel material can be traced back to Jesus remains arguable because all such explorations are uncertain and to some extent circular. We ask what 'coheres' with other material provisionally accepted as authentic, and about the historical continuities between Jesus and his Judaism, and between Jesus and his followers. These are only partly visible and judgments about what distinguished Jesus from his contemporaries are largely intuitive. Bultmann's crisp summaries of Jesus' teaching and preaching (1926, 1948, 1949) represent a consensus that the phrase 'the kingdom of God' contains the key to Jesus' proclamation and ministry, but there has been less agreement about what exactly Jesus meant by this phrase. J. Weiss has been generally followed in his insistence that it refers to what God (rather than humans) would do or was already doing in the 'end time' that was near. But how Jesus understood these impending changes has remained elusive and the conviction of Weiss and Bultmann (and Schweitzer) that the apocalyptic literature of early Judaism and Christianity justifies understanding the kingdom of God as implying an imminent end of the world has been widely disputed. Schweitzer's consistently futurist eschatology was challenged by R. Otto (1934), and by C. H. Dodd's claim (1935) that Jesus saw God's decisive intervention already happening in his own ministry. Dodd labelled this 'realized eschatology' and later accepted Jeremias's modification 'eschatology in the process of being realized', but he was challenging the whole emphasis on an imminent end of the world. It is possible to see Jesus' message as all about God's rule and to insist that a vision of the future is intrinsic to that, while doubting whether he speculated about cosmic upheavals.

Many critics have doubted that much of the 'little apocalypse' in Mark 13.5–27 goes back to Jesus, in which case some end of the world ideas have been later attributed to him (cf. Rev 2.25; 3.11; 22.20). Some of the early church's expectations may have been stimulated by the disciples' conviction that God had vindicated Jesus. But most critics as late as Bornkamm (1956) assumed that Jesus spoke of the Son of Man coming on the clouds, echoing Daniel 7.13, whether he referred this to himself or to someone else. When the authenticity of even the key passage Mark 8.38 (cf. Lk 12.8) became widely disputed, 'end of the world' interpretations of

Jesus' kingdom language became less secure and opened a door to recent American attempts to remove eschatology from Jesus' teaching, as some older liberals had done.

Alongside disagreements about how Jesus' kingdom language is best to be understood the twentieth century has been marked by disagreement about how much this matters to Christian faith today. Harnack and the older liberals thought their conclusions about Jesus should be decisive for modern Christianity. Bultmann, by contrast, thought the message of Jesus merely a presupposition and found the truth of the gospel unfolded in the theologies of Paul and John. This reaction against liberalism, and also the need of a confessional theology during the German political crisis were more responsible than the sceptical thrust of form criticism for the relative decline of German contributions to the 'Quest' from 1920 to the 1950s.

Dibelius wrote a popular work (1939), and Jeremias and Stauffer (1957) continued to see Jesus research as central to theology, as did T. W. Manson (1931) and many lesser figures in England and America. It was, however, neither these nor the advocates of 'salvation history' who revitalized historical study of Jesus in the post-war generation. What came to be labelled 'the new quest of the historical Jesus' (cf. J. M. Robinson 1959), was the work of Bultmann's pupils, all form critics and theologians of 'the Word'. Käsemann (1954) fired an opening salvo; Bornkamm (1956) produced the classic; Conzelmann (1959), Fuchs, Ebeling and others made valuable contributions. All agreed with the common sense of modern theology that somehow historical knowledge of Jesus must be theologically relevant – and also a rational possibility. It cannot yield the object of Christian faith, which is God in Christ confronting people today, but the continuities between this and the historical origins of Christianity are part of the story, and an important aspect of theological claims that the Christian story about God's revelation in history is in some sense true.

Like other gospel critics Bultmann (1921) had made some judgments about which sayings could be traced back to Jesus and noted the criteria (or rules of thumb) employed in making such uncertain decisions (205). In 1926 he summarized what he considered the earliest and most reliable traditions under three headings: the coming of the kingdom of God; the will of God; God remote and near. A generation later his pupil Bornkamm (1956) agreed that Jesus' message was 'about the reality of God, his kingdom and his will' (62) but wrote of the *person* who called followers into discipleship and who travelled to Jerusalem and death, rather than limiting himself with Bultmann to the *Word* that Jesus *brought*. Conzelmann (1959) again considered the self-consciousness of Jesus and gave priority to his faith in God (1968). Like Käsemann (1954) and others Bornkamm shifted the accents in 'the kingdom of God' to the presence of salvation in Jesus who confronted his hearers with the immediacy and nearness of a gracious God. The man from Nazareth brought good news, unlike John the Baptist who preached repentance in the face of imminent doom. Even before Easter, according to this group, Jesus was in essential agreement with Paul (e.g. Jüngel 1962). Käsemann spoke for them all when he saw in 'the connection and tension between the preaching of Jesus and that of his community' (47) the point of their questions about the historical Jesus.

All that reflects the strong theological interests that have been present in most historical research on Jesus from Strauss to the present day. But the ethos of some New Testament scholarship has changed in recent years, and nowhere is this clearer

than in the explosion of writing on Jesus in North America. It is misleading to distinguish different *quests* of the historical Jesus, but there are different *phases* in the history of research, and the final quarter of the twentieth century has brought some significant contributions from the literary and social scientific disciplines. It has also witnessed unprecedented media interest, thanks to R. W. Funk's 'Jesus seminar', justly criticized by L. T. Johnson (1995). This group may lack the weight of a Brown (1994) or a Meier (1991, 1994) but Funk echoes the eighteenth-century idea that the modern world needs, and modern criticism can supply, a new narrative of Jesus that has little but the name in common with traditional Christianity. This latest phase is often now called 'Jesus research' to emphasize its secular character, and to avoid the romantic and religious echoes of the word 'quest'. Christians and non-Christians can agree about the cultural significance of this enigmatic historical figure and the appropriate methods by which he may be investigated without bias, and perhaps without religious presuppositions. How much this can achieve remains to be seen.

QUEST AND RESEARCH CONTINUE

The most striking feature of New Testament scholarship in Europe and North America following the Holocaust and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran from 1947, and their slow publication, is the flourishing of research into the Jewish context of Jesus and his first followers. The new trend was signalled by the publication in 1973 of *Jesus the Jew* by the Jewish specialist on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Geza Vermes. He sees Jesus as a Galilean charismatic, or holy man, 'heir of an age-old prophetic religious line' (69). He also revived a surprisingly rarely advocated solution to the most vexed question of what Jesus meant by calling himself the Son of Man: simply a human being. The expression is not a title and the passages directly or indirectly referring to Daniel 7.13 are secondary (176).

Standing outside the mainstream of New Testament scholarship Vermes ignores the wider discussion of how the tradition developed, but his emphasis upon the Jewishness of Jesus and his attempt to locate a context and analogies in the complex history of first-century Palestine have become typical. Scarcely any scholar doubts that apart from chance encounters Jesus restricted his activity to his own people and to Palestine. That he was a Galilean, a teacher, healer, and charismatic leader of his disciples, and that he saw himself as a prophet, are widely agreed. Controversies with some of his contemporaries are well documented, but how close he stood to any particular group is uncertain. It is likely that the negative depiction of the Pharisees in the gospels partly reflects later controversies between church and synagogue, and yet Jesus' 'programme' was different from theirs, as it was from that of the Essenes (unmentioned in the gospels) and of the later Zealots. His distance from the Sadducean high-priestly aristocracy – who probably handed him over to Pilate – was surely even greater.

Comparisons with other individuals and groups, including the scribes of his day and later rabbis, have not resulted in any new consensus about Jesus. On the contrary, a better picture of the diversity within Palestinian Judaism during the Second Temple period, and scholarly disagreement about the nature and extent of resistance

to Rome prior to the great revolt (66–70 CE), have made room for several possible constructions of the 'Jewish Jesus'. Some, like those of Reimarus and Brandon (1967), are more political and this-worldly in orientation; others envision a more dramatic change to the whole cosmos. Whether and how God's intervention, which Jesus seems to have thought he was inaugurating, would involve a restoration or renewal of Judaism remains uncertain. The different possibilities may be illustrated by his dramatic action in the Temple (Mk 11.15). Was this an acted prophecy of its destruction (cf. Mk 13.2), and possibly its rebuilding by God (Cf. Mk 14.58; 15.29; Jn 2.19; Sanders 1985), or a protest about current practice, or even an attempt to change that and make sacrifices purer (Chilton 1992)?

What any historian makes of this incident, or how any saying judged original is interpreted, depends partly on a total view of Jesus' aims and activity. But that construction in turn depends on a large number of individual judgments that seem arbitrary if isolated from the larger web. We can rarely know the original context of Jesus' sayings, and that may have been decisive for their original meaning. Likely contexts can be suggested for particular parables and sayings, where Jesus answers criticisms of his ministry (Jeremias 1962), but these remain hypothetical.

Most of our evidence about Jesus consists in his sayings and parables, but uncertainty about their authenticity and meaning led the most impressive American historian of Jesus and (early) Judaism, E. P. Sanders (1985: 4f.), to rely less on these and more on the facts that provide a reasonably certain external framework of his life. The few certain historical facts, such as Jesus' baptism by John and his crucifixion under Pontius Pilate seem promising. Both these events were embarrassing for the early church and would never have been invented. But our knowledge of the Baptist is limited too, and Jesus both agreed and disagreed with him. Asking why Jesus was executed is a natural second step, but it is Christian theology not history that affirms the unity of his life and death. If his execution was a miscarriage of justice his aims and intentions can hardly be read out of this. So E. P. Sanders begins instead with the event in the Temple and moves on to Jewish expectations of a new Temple, proposing a hypothesis about Jesus' 'restoration eschatology'. This is historical detection at its best, but it remains one guess among others. The evidence remains open to different constructions.

Another way into the evidence is to ask what it was about Jesus that might help account for the emergence and character of Christianity. Sanders appeals to early Christian expectations of the end to support his view that Jesus expected that too. But Jesus might well have differed in substance as well as in style from his disciples' post-resurrection Spirit-filled enthusiasm, and there was more to early Christianity than its eschatology. Jesus apparently convinced his followers that the nearness of the rule of the God whom they could address as Father implied transformed personal and social relationships, in the present, without reference to the future of the world.

In trying to reconstruct the aims and activity of Jesus, or painting a historical portrait of him, gospel data have to be correlated both with the early church and with the historical possibilities suggested by the Palestinian context. Knowledge of his environment is fragmentary, but deciding what can be traced back to Jesus from among the memories and practices of the first-generation church is most uncertain

on account of our insufficient knowledge of the post-resurrection Palestinian Jesus movement. That makes it hard to say what began there and what goes back to Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles is a disappointment to the historian of early Jewish Christianity. Some evidence for this early period is no doubt embedded in the synoptic tradition itself, but what in these Greek documents goes back to Jesus, and what only to the Aramaic-speaking church is uncertain. There is a dark tunnel between our sources (the gospels) and the historical reality of Jesus.

Form criticism aimed to illuminate that tunnel period by discovering what had happened to the traditions during their forty years inside it. The literary forms identifiable in the synoptic gospels would perhaps suggest in what social contexts these different forms took shape. This optimism about detecting their 'Sitz im Leben' or 'settings in the life' (of the early church) has proved ill-founded, and it is not even clear how much of the history of the tradition was oral and how much written, or that 'laws' of oral transmission can be traced over so short a period (see Güttgemanns 1970; Kelber 1983). However, Gerd Theissen (1978, 1992) and others have successfully reopened the sociological line of enquiry implicit in form criticism, and even the older source criticism allowed the form critics to see something of how the tradition had developed. They accepted the source-critical hypothesis that Mark (or something very similar to our Mark) was independently used by the later synoptic evangelists. This has been confirmed by 'redaction criticism' of Matthew and Luke, that is, study of their editorial work on Mark, based on that hypothesis of Markan priority. Despite some opposition it is therefore possible to say with confidence how *some* of the tradition developed at those late points. That the evangelists used other sources is also plain, even if one central claim of the Q hypothesis, that Luke could not have known Matthew (or vice versa) is unproven and perhaps unlikely (see Sanders and Davies 1989). These 200 odd verses of 'double tradition', sayings material used (sometimes in different Greek versions) by Matthew and Luke (but absent from Mark), probably lead us back to the early Palestinian Jesus movement that preserved them, and also beyond that to original teaching of Jesus (see Catchpole 1993; Tuckett 1996).

Attempts to distinguish different layers within the hypothetical document Q are altogether more speculative (e.g. Kloppenborg 1987; Mack 1993). It may be wishful thinking that finds an earlier stratum free of eschatology in it. A Jesus altogether free of eschatology might seem more relevant to contemporary social concerns than the eschatological prophet more usually found in the synoptic tradition, and that has perhaps contributed to portrayals of Jesus as an itinerant Greek philosopher engaged in social criticism (Downing 1987; Mack 1988).

This dubious development in gospel study was encouraged by the discovery in 1945 at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt of a library of Gnostic documents, including the probably second-century *Gospel of Thomas*, which previously had been known only in fragments. That text consisting of 114 sayings and parables of Jesus overlaps with the synoptic tradition, and some think it is independent of the synoptic gospels (Crossan 1985; Koester 1990). The *Gospel of Thomas* itself is later than these, and plainly heretical by the standards of the emerging catholic orthodoxy, but it contains earlier material, and possibly more original versions of some of Jesus' teaching. It at least helps us to understand how the tradition of his parables and

aphorisms developed. However, the heavy reliance placed on this new material by a few scholars, notably J. D. Crossan (1991), may be influenced by the kind of 'historical Jesus' it yields.

These attempts to deny Jesus' eschatology illustrate how wide a range of reconstructions is possible, and even if unpersuasive they identify a problem with one-sided emphases on eschatology. Jesus' moral and wisdom teaching is surely important (Borg 1984, 1987) and not easily combined with some eschatological scenarios. This has led some to emphasize his engagement with his own social context. The description of Jesus as a 'social prophet' (Horsley 1987, 1989) rather than an eschatological prophet leaves room for an eschatological hope in God's future intervention, but places the weight of Jesus' activity on his proposals for local community life. Alternatively, it remains possible to recognize the eschatological dimension of Jesus' teaching but to see this as a necessary aspect of his talk of God.

In short, the historical investigation of Jesus flourishes today as never before, and a scholarly consensus looks less likely than ever. The most interesting advances of the past few years can be summarized under two heads already noted: literary and social scientific.

The most important shift within biblical – especially Old Testament – studies over the past generation has been the application of modern literary approaches to this literature. That has naturally affected the study of the gospel *narratives*, but what is more surprising is its impact on the *historical* study of Jesus. He was a poet (Burney 1925; Jeremias 1971) and teller of stories (Breech 1983), and it is surely significant that he sometimes spoke of God's rule in parables. This figurative language that engages the hearer's *will*, no less than the intellect, is also difficult to reproduce at second-hand. The historian's attempts to describe Jesus' talk of God objectively are likely to distort it: we murder to dissect. Literary analysis of these metaphorical narratives has sharpened critics' antennae for the very *voice* of Jesus, whether or not the very *words* of his poetry and aphorisms can be reconstructed (Via 1967; Wilder 1982; Scott 1989). A new sense of his imaginative and forceful use of language illuminates his understanding of God and religion (Tannehill 1975). The elusiveness of these sources stems from their non-objectifiable subject matter, but the near certainty that Jesus spoke of God's rule in *parables*, that is, indirectly and in a way that 'teases the hearer into active thought' (Dodd 1935), says something about its character.

The interpretation of literature depends in part on the responses it evokes, and a literary or religious sensitivity is more help here than a positivistic demand for the facts. If talk of God is necessarily self-involving and subjective, part of the historian's difficulties in describing Jesus' teaching may actually stem from the attempt to be objective. Bultmann (1926) tried to surmount this difficulty by an existentialist theory of history writing. He wanted to lead his readers to a highly personal *encounter* with history by providing information about his own encounter with history. But what he offers is a literary theory based on his encounter with the *texts*. Most historians have insisted that much can be said about Jesus regardless of one's own commitments, and have left Bultmann's hermeneutics to others. But in doing so they may have surrendered the key to interpreting Jesus' talk of God. And that is surely the key to what Jesus said and did, as his followers claimed.

If literary approaches yield a surprising enrichment of historical research, the use of methods and perspectives from the social sciences was a more predictable development. Religion in Second Temple Judaism was inseparable from politics and society, and the social history of Galilee and Judaea in this period has been the subject of further exploration (Hengel 1973; Freyne 1980, 1988). Archaeology, the new written sources, and new questions to old data (e.g. in some parables prevailing social arrangements are reflected) have yielded fresh insights. The task is still historical, but models drawn from cross-cultural studies in sociology and social anthropology have provided new hypotheses to be tested by the fragmentary data. Disciplinary boundaries have melted as these resources are drawn upon to help interpret the symbols adopted, adapted, or generated by Jesus himself.

This does not allow historically verified judgments about the 'inner life of Jesus'. Anything that coincides with post-resurrection belief about Jesus, such as his status, the way he fulfilled the scriptures, or the meaning of his death, might have been influenced by what happened and has to be set aside until its coherence with a critically assured minimum can be ascertained. But even when much of the data has been bracketed as 'doubtful' there is plenty of material to consider. Jesus emerges from the responses of his followers and opponents as a credible historical figure. The disappointment and frustration for would-be biographers is that the trail becomes unclear or uncertain just where our historical questions are most urgent: What did he mean by 'the kingdom of God'? Or 'the Son of Man'? Did he think about himself as a 'messiah', and if so of what kind? Did he expect God to intervene in this world's history soon, and if so what did he expect would follow? The questions that persuaded Schweitzer to return him to the museum of history are again wide open. The witness of the texts invites other forms of judgment, as Schweitzer also recognized.

But historians continue their trade, making their best guesses where certainty is impossible and probability the guide of life, including academic life. The range of possible reconstructions is a school for sceptics but also a constant source of stimulus and a reminder of the real humanity of the person whom believers call master and Lord. Far from leading students and followers of Jesus to give up in despair, the many possibilities are a challenge to exercise the critical judgment that is nowhere more needed than in religion.

Two of the heroes of this great debate, William Wrede (1971: 281–3) and Albert Schweitzer (1910: 137–60) shared a surprising admiration for a friend and teacher of Karl Marx: Bruno Bauer, who later denied the historical existence of Jesus. He was mistaken, but saw more clearly than most the problems in the gospels that had subverted Jesus research. A historical report on Jesus still needs to register the difficulties and admit how tentative anything beyond a bare outline must be. But critical analysis of the sources and attempts at hypothetical reconstructions will continue for as long as the historical figure of Jesus looks important or interesting, and the sources themselves worth sifting. Some proposals seem to have been refuted but the task of interpreting an influential historical figure is never finished. The task of interpreting such literary and religious texts as the gospels also continues, and most theologians continue to welcome the contribution of critical historians.

FROM MARY TO PILATE

The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds refer to the historical context of the first-century Jew that they confess Messiah, Lord, and Son of God, by naming two other historical figures: his mother and the Roman official who was in charge of occupied Judaea from 26 to 36 CE and responsible for Jesus' crucifixion. Like most of the other characters in the gospel story Mary is unknown to world history except through the New Testament and later Christian imagination. Luke's lengthy annunciation and birth narratives evoke an atmosphere of pious Israel awaiting its Saviour Messiah, but add little trustworthy historical information to what can be gleaned from the earlier gospel tradition. Traces of slander concerning Jesus' birth (Jn 8.41) and a later legend about Mary's adultery with a soldier called Panthera (Chadwick 1953) add nothing to our knowledge of Jesus' origins.

If Matthew is correct in associating the birth of Jesus with a story about Herod the Great who ruled Palestine from 37–4 BCE (cf. also Lk 1.5), then Jesus was born a few years before our calendars imply. The reference in Luke 2.1 to the census that took place in 6/7 CE cannot be accurate and was probably drawn into the story to support Christian belief that as Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth must have been born in Bethlehem (cf. Mic 5.2 quoted at Mt 2.6; see also Jn 7.41f.). Luke 3.23 claims that he was about thirty when he began his ministry and this is usually accepted, even though John 8.57 might imply that he was older. John the Baptist is at best an imprecise guide to the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and no help at all on the date of his birth – the legends of Luke 1–2 are structured to clarify the theological relationship of the two men, not their ages or biological kinship.

The genealogies of Matthew and Luke both claim that Jesus was a descendent of David (see also the earlier tradition preserved by Paul at Rom 1.3). Some dispute about this may be reflected in Mark 12.35–7 (as later in the *Epistle of Barnabas*), and perhaps at John 7.27 too. But Christian use of the title 'Son of David' may have grown out of subsequent belief in Jesus' messiahship rather than from reliable information.

Jesus was no doubt brought up in Nazareth in Galilee, a carpenter or builder, whose mother Mary and brothers James, Joses, Judas, and Simon, and unnamed sisters were known (Mk 6.3). There is no mention here of a father, and it may be assumed that Joseph, named Jesus' father at John 1.46 and 6.42 and as his putative father in the birth narratives and genealogies, was already dead when Jesus began his ministry. Some have argued that Jesus' 'brothers' were actually cousins or half-brothers.

It seems that Jesus' family appeared during his ministry 'seeking him' – and were rebuffed (Mk 3.31–5). Several of his sayings indicate that the demands of the kingdom take priority over family ties (Mt 8.21 par. Lk 9.59) and that discipleship might bring divisions within families (Mk 13.12 par. Mt 10.21; Lk 21.16; Lk 14.29). The marginal position of the family of Jesus in the synoptic tradition is hard to reconcile with James' leadership of the Jerusalem church by the late 40s. This may imply rapid promotion – or it may reflect Markan hostility to the Jerusalem church. The importance of James in Jerusalem is clear from Paul (Gal 2), Acts, and Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.200), and the family's role in Jewish Christianity is apparent from fragments of Hegesippus preserved by Eusebius (Louth 1989) and from other echoes, but historical detective-work in this area rapidly becomes speculation (Eisenman 1997).

The historical picture becomes clearer with the activity of John the Baptist, not least because the Jewish historian Josephus who published his *Antiquities* in Rome in 93 CE gives a brief but independent account of John's ministry and his death at the hands of Herod Antipas. This 'good man was telling the Jews to practise virtue and justice towards one another and piety towards God, and to join together for baptism . . .' (*Antiquities* 18.116–19). Josephus's apologia for Judaism was written on an imperial pension, and naturally suppresses John's politically dangerous eschatological message, but it complements what the four gospels say and gives a more plausible account of his murder at the fort Machaerus than the gory legend of Mark 6, summarized in Matthew 14.

Baptism following repentance hardly seemed appropriate to Christian belief in Jesus as the sinless Son of God, and it also suggested Jesus' subordination to John (Mt 3.14f.), and the embarrassment of the early church confirms the historicity of the event, though not of the supernatural details. Jesus associated himself with this movement and that provides a possible key to his own understanding of his mission. It is possible that initially he himself baptized (Jn 3.22, despite 4.2) and quite probable that some of his followers began as disciples of John (so Jn 1.35–7; see also Acts 19.1–7). On the other hand Jesus could contrast his mission and lifestyle with John's; he was himself not a wilderness ascetic: 'For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say "He has a demon"; the Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say "Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!"' (Mt 11.18f. = Lk 7.33f.).

It is this combination of agreement and disagreement with John that offers a key to Jesus' own understanding of his mission. He saw John as a prophet, more than a prophet, none greater, and a marker in what was now happening in his own activity relating to God's rule (Mt 11.9, 11–13). But this key proves difficult to turn. What the gospels tell us about John is coloured by later Christian assumptions about his relationship as forerunner (cf. Mal. 3.1; 4.5) to what God was doing in Jesus (cf. Mt 11.3 par. Lk 7.19). It is possible to distinguish between more and less reliable traditions, and also to reconstruct much of the social and religious context, but rash to suppose that we fully understand John's own expectations or precisely where Jesus agreed and disagreed with him. It is also conceivable that some of John's preaching of judgment has been attributed to Jesus (Lk 13.1–5?).

John in the wilderness called on the nation to repent in the face of God's impending judgment, echoing the religious and moral demands of the biblical prophets, but unlike them offering baptism as a sign of cleansing in response to God's demand. Whether he spoke of God's rule coming, as the editorial Matthew 3.2 claims, is impossible to say.

The Qumran community was also appealing to Isaiah 40.3 and preparing in the wilderness a path for God, studying the law and practising daily ritual lustrations. Luke 1 claims priestly descent for John and a connexion with Qumran is quite possible, but for him as for Jesus withdrawal was the prelude to a public activity that could be considered a threat to political stability (cf. Jn 11.48).

The relationship of Jesus to John the Baptist is important, but leaves us with more questions than answers. At the other end of the gospel story stands another historical character whose decision to crucify Jesus should, if it were just, throw

light on the ministry. The crucifixion is the hardest fact in the gospel record, amply attested by Paul who both persecuted and joined the church within three years of the event (cf. Gal 1-2; 1 Cor 15.1-11). This Roman punishment for slaves and rebels at once poses the question whether Jesus was a rebel or revolutionary. Reimarus supposed that he was, and plausibly connected that question to the meaning of Jesus' political metaphor, the kingdom of God.

Unfortunately there is no direct path from the manner of Jesus' death to the manner of his life, because his death was probably a miscarriage of justice. One can understand the nervousness and the hostility of the Temple authorities. Anyone who attracted a following was a threat to civil order in Roman-occupied Palestine, and the death of the Baptist shows how little was needed for precautionary measures to seem appropriate. The response of Caiaphas (according to Jn 11.50) to the fear that Jesus' religious activity and its acceptance could lead the Romans to destroy 'our place and our nation' was entirely reasonable, if not entirely just. But there is nothing in the teaching of Jesus to support the political charge on which according to the probably authentic superscription on the cross ('king of the Jews'), he was executed.

It is important to recognize that Pilate, not the Jews, killed Jesus, even if at Caiaphas' instigation, and to consider whether any aspects of his ministry were deemed politically dangerous, as the superscription on the cross implies. The revealing fact here is that initially only Jesus was executed. That his followers (unlike those of other messianic prophets) were not rounded up suggests that he was not seen as leading a political revolt, and John 6.15 depicts a flight from any such suggestion. Passover was a particularly sensitive time, with large numbers of pilgrims in Jerusalem celebrating a festival that recalled a past political liberation and included future hopes and expectations. Pilate executed Jesus; and the gospels' claim that he found him innocent is hard to credit. The high-priestly aristocracy probably handed him over to Pilate, and the motivation attributed to Caiaphas at John 11.48 is credible. The implication of Mark 3.6 that some Pharisees plotted with some 'Herodians' to destroy him because they opposed his liberal attitude to the law is not credible. We may discount the Johannine placement (Jn 2) of the incident in the Temple and suppose that this finally provoked the high priest's decision. It is hard to doubt that one of Jesus' inner group of disciples, Judas Iscariot, then facilitated his arrest. This was too embarrassing to have been invented by the early church.

The historicity of the details of the passion narratives can be challenged at almost every point (Crossan 1995; but contrast Brown 1994), even though the four gospels agree more closely here than elsewhere and the short time-span dictates the general shape of events. It is clear that the early church's conviction that the death of Jesus took place 'according to the scriptures' (1 Cor 15.3) has influenced its telling and retelling of the story. Psalm 22 in particular has surely supplied some details, including the cry of dereliction (Mk 15.34), which John and Luke have replaced. Mark's 'myrrh' becomes 'gall' at Matthew 27.34 in order to correspond to Psalm 69.22 (Septuagint 68.22). John and the synoptics disagree about whether the Friday on which Jesus was crucified was the 14 or 15 Nisan. Against Jeremias (1963), John's earlier dating is more credible, in which case the Last Supper was not a Passover meal.

What Jesus said and did at that meal, probably like others an anticipation of the future messianic banquet but including a symbolic reference to his impending violent death through bread being broken and wine outpoured, and a word about God's kingdom and his own future vindication in God's kingdom, became the foundation of the Christian liturgy. The three independent records in 1 Corinthians 11, Mark 14 (modified slightly in Mt 26), and Luke 22 do not allow the historian to say precisely what Jesus had in mind. The kingdom sounds other-worldly here and suggestions that Jesus expected an imminent divine intervention are speculative. He more likely expected his imminent arrest (above p. 229).

The Markan account of Jesus' arrest is broadly reliable, even if the improbable story of the ear injury grew out of a scriptural echo of Zechariah 13.7; cf. 14.13. The idea that the disciples were carrying offensive weapons has fuelled modern speculations about armed revolution. The preceding account of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (Mk 14.32–42, followed by Matthew and Luke) shows signs of later Christian reflection, and it becomes even harder to vouch for the details of what followed. In Crossan's opinion 'those who cared did not know and those who knew did not care' (1995: 219). Much of what is recorded, such as Peter's denial, is plausible, but could equally reflect a post-resurrection interest in encouraging Christians. Some claims, such as the release of Barabbas, are implausible, and legendary traits appear in Matthew 27 with Pilate's hand-washing and his wife's dream. The apologetic intent of the story of the guard at the tomb is clear (Matthew 28.15), as is the theological interest in the resurrection of saints at Matthew 27.51b–3. The veil of the Temple being rent (Mk 15.38 and parallels) is almost certainly symbolic, as is the darkness over the land, rationalized by Luke into an eclipse – but that is contradicted by astronomy. (Passover falls close to the full moon; a solar eclipse only at a new moon.) The scriptural detail (Ex 12.46; Zech 12.10) that illuminates John's account of the death of Jesus is equally unlikely to be historical.

The trial before the Sanhedrin (Mk 14.55–65) is highly suspect as it stands, and John's account (18.13f.) of an informal hearing before Annas and Caiaphas more likely. Mark's account is not entirely coherent (what *was* Jesus' blasphemy?), and it reaches a climax in the evangelist's Christology, but it is quite likely that the Temple was at issue when Jesus came before the Jewish authorities (so Mk 14.58) and that they brought a political charge against him in order to secure from Pilate the death penalty that they (probably) could not themselves enforce (Jn 18.31).

Modern scholars are rightly concerned that unhistorical details in the passion narratives, such as the crowd's involvement in the crucifixion of Jesus, above all the horrendous cry of Matthew 27.25, have fostered anti-Semitism. Torture and mockery by the soldiers is credible, by the Sanhedrin not. The tendency of the gospels and later Christian tradition to exonerate Pilate does not fit what is known of that brutal governor, and the drama of John's dialogue between him and Jesus is drama not history. It is even possible to suspect that all the trial accounts, including one before Herod in Luke (perhaps inspired by Ps 2.1f; cf. Acts 4.25f.) are fictional, as are probably the various words of Jesus from the cross (different in each gospel), and the Gentile centurion's confession (Mk 15.39), which again echoes Mark's Christology (and Luke's apologetic: 23.47). Simon of Cyrene, by contrast, the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mk 15.21), is surely historical, despite John 19.17.

At many points the argument about historicity can be made either way. Is the young man who flees naked at Mark 14.51 an eyewitness (even the evangelist, as some have imagined), or based on Amos 2.16, or a symbol of the risen Lord leaving his 'garment' (cf. 15.46) behind? More importantly, is the highly illegal sword drawn at Gethsemane (Mk 14.47) historical (and a pointer to insurrection), or does it result from a misunderstanding of an earlier tradition alluding to Zechariah 13.7? (That Old Testament verse is important a little earlier, at Mk 14.28.) The further development of this sword tradition at Luke 22.35–8 is unhelpful and presumably unhistorical, however illustrative of Luke's theology.

Ever since Reimarus, the historicity of the empty tomb has been questioned by sceptics and there cannot be much doubt that many of the contradictory traditions are secondary. But Easter is part of the *Christian* story of Jesus and that goes beyond *historians'* reconstructions of his life and death. Even when we ask how his followers became convinced of his resurrection, and suspect that this might throw light on the man himself, that question concerns his *influence* and offers only indirect support for our reconstructions. The truth or falsity of the mystery or God-event metaphorically called the resurrection of Jesus, which most Christians consider foundational to their faith, is a different kind of question. Its religious answers do not depend on the *historical* question about the reliability of the Easter traditions. These *are* related to the further historical question of how the disciples' Easter faith emerged and some accounts of this might erode or (in the case of Reimarus) falsify Christian faith. But in practice the evidence is too weak either to support or to discredit the disciples' conviction that God had vindicated Jesus.

In contrast to the wealth of detail provided for Jesus' final hours on earth the narratives of his ministry between his baptism and the Last Supper provide a rough framework rather than an accurate outline. Each evangelist has structured the story in order to communicate the message rather than to provide a chronology of the ministry, and the material is sometimes arranged according to subject matter, and sometimes to assist hearers' memory. It is impossible to be sure how long Jesus' ministry lasted (perhaps little over a year, discounting John's extra Passover), or how often he went to Jerusalem prior to his final pilgrimage and what the gospels present as a messianic entry into the city. The gospels' framework can be enriched by what is now known of first-century Palestine and, in the light of this, details can be challenged as implausible (such as the Pharisees who appear in the cornfields on the sabbath at Mk 2.24). Form criticism has taught us to regard the narrative frameworks of these individual incidents as less reliable than the sayings of Jesus, which form their kernels. His teaching will accordingly be the heart of our historical matter, even though it is not the heart of the Christian and biblical story of Jesus.

Particular narratives such as the transfiguration and some miracle-stories have been questioned by historians on account of their heavy overlay of post-resurrection belief, or the difficulty in imagining what might actually have happened. Wrede doubts the reliability of Peter's messianic confession and Jesus' response at Caesarea Philippi (Mk 8.29) whereas some scholars' whole reconstruction of the ministry have hinged on this. They have thought that Jesus must have thought himself the Messiah, but that he needed to reinterpret the title to avoid any national political connotations. But this is already to go to the heart of historical research about Jesus and to try

to make sense of his teaching, and with it his own understanding of his message. Before turning to that, the most important and well-attested aspect of his ministry must be underlined: Jesus was a healer and exorcist.

Exorcism can be interpreted negatively, as it was by some of his opponents (Mk 3.22) or positively, as by his disciples, the evangelists, and subsequent Christian believers (Mt 11.5 = Lk 7.22; Mt 12.28 = Lk 11.20; etc.). The witness of opponents is strong evidence for some historical basis, and Jesus' replies are also revealing. He both argues rationally (Mk 3.23–6) and speaks in a parable or metaphor of the strong man being bound and his house plundered (v. 27). He evidently saw the powers of evil being stemmed by his healing activity. He can compare himself with other exorcists, without any claim to uniqueness (Mt 12.27), but he also interprets his exorcisms as showing that the kingdom of God is breaking in (Mt 12.28 = Lk 11.20). The Fourth Gospel selects (20.30) no exorcisms to report, perhaps because its presentation of the transcendent glory of Jesus precludes any hint of a struggle with evil. Mark, however, summarizes (1.32, 39; 3.10f.; 6.56) and reports several.

The category of 'miracle' poses problems for modern historians because it implies an interpretation of an alleged event, which they do not typically entertain. But few historians would doubt or deny that Jesus was a healer and engaged in what some people then and now interpreted as exorcisms. Some would argue that this even more than his teaching is what attracted the crowds to follow him (Smith 1978).

At almost every point it is possible to challenge the historicity of individual narratives, and in the systematic analysis of a Strauss this builds up an impression that very little can be known about Jesus. But that has always been contradicted by the impression of many readers of the gospels that when all allowance is made for the peculiarities of the tradition this Galilean charismatic can be known surprisingly well. Apart from the context and the extraordinary impact of his life, a picture of the man emerges in his relationships with friends and followers, enquirers and opponents. How illuminating this might be was once shown by Cadbury (1947) and now by Theissen (1996) in a co-authored book suggestive of the new climate of 'post-minimalism', an expression applied by J. Barton in Jesus research. How well we can ever know another human being, especially one from a distant time and culture, may still be questioned. Historians and biographers bring much of their own expectations and experience to their narrative task, and there is always room for conflicting interpretations of the data. And some will continue to doubt whether that frame of reference can ever be adequate for interpreting a religious master who became an exclusive focus for so much later religious devotion.

POLITICS, ESCHATOLOGY, ETHICS

The gospels name two Caesars, four Herods, two high priests, and Pontius Pilate, all known also to Roman and/or Jewish historians. This helps modern historians to do what Luke did at 2.1f., 3.1f.: locate Jesus and Christian origins on the map of world history. But everything that is reasonably certain about Jesus comes from Christian sources, in particular the four New Testament gospels. St Paul in the 50s (quoting very early traditions) recalls the Last Supper 'in the night in which he was betrayed' (1 Cor 11.23–6) and his death on a cross, and the second-century *Gospel*

of *Thomas* (above p. 233) contains sayings and parables that overlap and call for comparison with the synoptic gospels. The surviving fragments of other apocryphal gospels are interesting, but historically worthless. Non-Christian sources yield even less, and are dependent on Christian informants. Josephus's account of Jesus as Messiah and risen (*Antiquities* 18.163f.) consists entirely or in part of Christian interpolation, and the Talmud's references to Jesus have probably inserted his name into stories of other outsiders. When all these sources are assessed (Theissen 1996, 17–89) almost all our trustworthy information still stems from the four gospels, sifted and compared. The challenge they pose is that this is part of a story quite unlike what modern historians aim to provide. The latter want credible facts and historical interpretations of this first-century figure, not theological interpretations. The gospels' religious message about Israel's God engaging with the world to put it right through the life, death, and resurrection of God's Messiah, by contrast, is intended to challenge and instruct, not merely inform. The gospels interpret and retell the story of Jesus with religious intent to build up Christian character and community.

This does not make historical research impossible. The evangelists' purposes and perspectives led them to provide some historical information about the Jesus of Nazareth they called Messiah and Son of God. These narratives contain more or less of what Jesus probably said and did and suffered. Even their post-resurrection standpoint and retrojection into the ministry of some later beliefs about Jesus may throw some light on this remarkable man and the mission that somehow led to the formation of a church. The disciples' dawning perceptions of a decisive revelation of God in Jesus can hardly be unrelated to how he behaved and what he taught. These Christian witnesses are likely to reveal something about the man they now see in a new light. It is possible that what attracted his followers was a political programme, but it is more probable that the sources are correct and that Jesus was less directly concerned with the deteriorating political situation in Palestine than some of his contemporaries could have wished. He can scarcely have avoided the political aspects of Jewish life at the time, even if his message was addressed more to individuals (Mt 10.5) than to the nation as a whole. But there is no direct evidence of a political aim or intention. The saying 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's' is hardly a call to arms, and at 23.2 Luke presents the political charge as a deliberate fabrication, no doubt correctly, even though he himself introduced the dangerous word 'king' at 19.38 (cf. Jn 1.50; 6.15; 12.13; 18.33–9; 19.12–21).

The political metaphor of kingship may, but need not, imply a political programme. The Jewish Prayer of Eighteen Benedictions from around this time includes 'Restore our judges as before . . . and be king over us, you alone'. That leaves no room for Roman rule in Palestine and corresponds to the ideal of the Zealots in the Jewish War. It probably lay behind the question to Jesus about paying taxes to Caesar, but if so Jesus declined the suggestion. The promise to the twelve of 'sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel' (Mt 19.28; cf. Lk 22.30) might originally have referred to political restoration and rule on earth (cf. Ps 122.5) rather than to heaven (cf. Rev 3.21) and the last judgment, but its language of 'rebirth' is so unlike other synoptic sayings of Jesus that its authenticity may be doubted on grounds of coherence (above p. 229). The reference to the eschatological

Son of Man is dubious on other grounds (below p. 252). The saying may reflect the expectations of early Jewish disciples rather than Jesus himself (cf. Mk 10.37).

Some Jews at this time expected a restoration of Israel under a Davidic king, and Luke 1.32f. has a reliable witness (Gabriel) echo that expectation, even though the evangelist knows it was not fulfilled in the way expected (Lk 24.21; Acts 1.6) and needed reinterpreting. The Davidic messianic status of Jesus was a very early Christian belief, as Romans 1.3f. looks like a quotation from an even earlier Christian creed. Both Matthew and Luke emphasize Jesus' descent from David, and Luke the fulfilment of the promise to David (2 Sam 7.14), but Matthew reinterprets the royal title 'Son of David' in the light of the historical reality of Jesus' healing ministry, and there is no good evidence that Jesus cared for it. If Mark 12.35–7 were authentic it would imply the contrary. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was construed as royal and messianic, whether at the time or later, but there is a trace of Jesus resisting kingship (Jn 6.15). Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah at Mark 8.27–31 shows too many signs of editorial activity to provide secure information about Jesus' understanding of his mission. If reliable this too would tell against Jesus having political ambitions. The possibility was rightly raised by Reimarus, but has rightly been laid to rest. Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God calls for more plausible interpretations.

The strongest indicator of possible political involvement by Jesus is his execution by Pilate with the inscription on the cross, 'the king of the Jews'. But like John the Baptist's execution by Herod Antipas this tells us more about the authorities' caution than about Jesus' intentions (see above, p. 238). To try to discover these we are driven back to the records of what he said and did, placing a question mark against material that shows most signs of a post-resurrection perspective, especially the Johannine discourses, Christological claims, and alleged fulfilments of scripture. That still leaves plenty of material, but also ambiguities in detail and scope for very different total portraits.

The usual scholarly trail has concentrated on Jesus' sayings and parables, recognizing that these will have been more exactly remembered than their contexts or framework. Hardly anyone now attempts to reconstruct a chronology of the ministry. K. L. Schmidt (1919) showed the secondary character of the gospel framework and form criticism that the sayings provide the kernel of the most reliable stories. Uncertainty about the authenticity and precise meaning of these sayings (in Greek translation) and about their original contexts led E. P. Sanders (1985) to take an alternative route (above p. 232) and begin with Jesus' action in the Temple. But this approach founders on the ambiguity of even that near-certain event and Sanders abandoned it in his later book (1993). The most reliable sayings of Jesus must provide the keys to our understanding of his understanding of his mission.

One saying already noted links the most prominent aspect of his activity with what was remembered as the main theme of his teaching. 'If I by the Spirit (Lk: finger) of God cast out demons then indeed the kingdom of God has come upon you' (Mt 12.28; Lk 11.20). Mark summarizes Jesus' proclamation (1.15) as including the claim that 'the kingdom of God has drawn near', and all three synoptic gospels confirm the prominence of the phrase 'the kingdom of God' (usually varied by Matthew to 'the kingdom of heaven' to avoid naming God, but with the same

meaning). The phrase also occurs in Acts and in Paul's letters but it is not central to post-resurrection preaching and so is unlikely to have been read back on to Jesus' lips from that.

There is every reason to believe that for Jesus himself it encapsulated his ministry and his message. But what does it mean and in what sense has it 'drawn near'? The verb is ambiguous: if something has drawn near it may be here or near. But the larger question is what 'it' is – if indeed it is an 'it'. What was Jesus referring to that he summed up in the phrase 'the kingdom of God'?

As we have seen (above p. 229), differences of opinion about the meaning of this phrase have generated different accounts of Jesus from Reimarus to the present range of possibilities.

There is general agreement that behind the Greek *basileia* (kingdom or kingly rule) stands the Hebrew *malkut* and Aramaic *malkuta'* usually meaning 'rule' rather than 'realm', 'kingship' rather than 'kingdom', even though Jesus' verb 'to enter' it suggests a place where God rules more readily than the situation of God ruling. The one implies the other, but the primary meaning of the phrase is God's sovereign rule. Jesus is speaking of *God*, and using a common metaphor to express God's supremacy over all the world. Interpretations that refer the phrase to a this-worldly community constructed by human effort do less than justice to Jesus' first-century Jewish understanding of God, even though both human moral effort and this-worldly community were also important in early Judaism.

Interpreting the metaphors, parables and poetry in which Jesus spoke of God involves more than invoking background and parallels. Historical research can clarify some issues and is surely indispensable, but interpreters may also reveal their own prior understandings of God-talk here, and that may account for some of their differences in emphasis.

Some occurrences of 'the kingdom' in Matthew and Luke seem to be editorial, to judge from the parallel passages in Mark, but generally there is no reason to doubt that the Greek of the gospels represent much of what Jesus said in Aramaic. He did not explain his phrase and presumably expected (some of) his hearers to understand him. The underlying assumption is that God rules. According to the Jewish scriptures the Creator is sovereign and all-powerful. Though not common in Jesus' scriptures the metaphor of kingship is found at Psalms 93.1, 96.10, 97.1, 99.1 and elsewhere, and part of what the metaphor *means* for those who acknowledge God as Lord and King is, 'O come let us worship and fall down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker' (Ps 95.6).

Religious talk of God in general, and Jesus' Jewish tradition in particular has implications for those who use it. In Judah God is known (Ps 76.1) as the one who made a covenant with this people. They are committed to accepting God's rule by obeying God's law. Some rabbis later called the individual's acceptance of this life under God's rule 'taking upon oneself the yoke of the kingdom' (cf. Mt 11.29f.). Many Israelites saw their enemies as God's enemies, people who do not acknowledge God's rule. The present age or world in which the righteous suffer is out of joint, and God seems far off. But things will change, because God is coming to judge the earth and all its peoples with righteousness (Pss 96.13; 98.9). A hope for the future is intrinsic to confidence in a just God in an unjust world. God's promises to Israel,

kept alive by the prophets and in worship, and in the synagogue where the scriptures were paraphrased in Aramaic, could lead to heightened expectations at times of particular misery.

This active sense of God ruling the world is the background of Jesus' use of the phrase 'the kingdom (or rule) of God'. When he teaches his disciples to pray for its coming (Mt 6.10 = Lk 11.2) he echoes the hope for the future that is a vital component of trust in God. The roughly contemporary Jewish Kaddish prayer uses similar language: 'Magnified and sanctified (hallowed) be His great name in the world . . . may his kingdom be established during your life and during your days and during the life of the whole house of Israel, even speedily and at a near time'. The hope of imminence underlines its urgency, without necessarily expecting immediate fulfilment.

When Jesus says that the kingdom of God 'has drawn near', on the other hand, or that it has 'come upon' those who witnessed his exorcisms (Mt 12.28 = Lk 11.20) this seems to imply that God's coming to rule the earth is imminent or present. Many interpreters since Weiss (1892) and Schweitzer (1906) have therefore concluded that Jesus was mistaken. The evidence, however, is weak.

There is no clear evidence that Jesus expected the imminent *destruction of the world* and the creation of a new heaven and new earth, as some apocalypses did. At Mark 13.32 (Mt 24.36) he denies all knowledge of God's eschatological timetable. Neither Matthew 10.23 nor much of Mark 13.5–27 is likely to be reliable. The strongest reason for attributing to Jesus an expectation of the imminent end of the world is the saying in Mark 13.30 that 'this generation will not pass away before all these things take place'. The reference in verse 28 to the harvest (a metaphor for the last judgment) being near rings true, but how much of what precedes this goes back to Jesus, and therefore what 'all these things' in 13.30 might cover, is unclear. The verse's time-reference (within this generation) is widely disputed as not cohering with the rest of Jesus' message. It contains no reference to the kingdom of God, and its variant form at Mark 9.1, reinterpreted by Matthew at 16.28, is presumably secondary. Jesus' saying about 'drinking the fruit of the vine new in the (future) kingdom of God' probably implies the imminence of his arrest, not the imminence of the kingdom. He is confident of sharing in the eschatological banquet with them in God's kingdom after his death, but only God knows when (or where, or how) that will be. Jesus had an eschatology but his proclamation of God's rule should not be translated into an expectation of an imminent end of this world nor even its imminent transformation. He will have shared with many of his contemporaries a passionate hope and expectation that God would establish God's just rule on earth. Anything less would lack trust in the all-powerful and all-loving Creator in a palpably unjust world. There is no teleological religion without eschatology. But how he envisaged the eschatological 'day of the Lord' and the judgment of which the biblical prophets and psalmists had spoken is probably not the key to his phrase 'the kingdom of God'.

It is clear that some in the early church, notably Paul, did think that the end of this present evil age was very near, because the new age had already broken in with the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor 15.20). That belief is not far from what Jesus himself thought was happening in his own activity (Mt 12.28 again). Neither Jesus nor Paul

had any illusions about the present time of tribulations, yet both thought God was near enough to be responded to in faith and confident hope, and both encouraged their hearers with this belief (Mt 5.3–9; 1 Thess 4.13–17; 1 Cor 15.58; Rom 8.18–39). Paul thought that he was interpreting Jesus correctly when he said (1 Thess 4.15) that ‘we who are alive and survive to the *parousia* of the Lord’ will not precede believers who have died. But this does not look like a saying of Jesus. It might be Paul’s own inference from the source of Mark 13.30, though it could depend on a ‘word of the Lord’ by an early Christian prophet (cf. Rev 22.20). That might even be the origin of Mark 13.30, encouraging persecuted followers of Jesus to hold on (cf. Mk 13.13).

When Paul does echo a saying of the earthly Jesus about the day of the Lord coming ‘like a thief in the night’ (1 Thess 5.2f.; cf. Mt 24.43; Lk 12.39) there is no timetable attached, and that is the point of the simile. Everyone must therefore be prepared. Paul inferred imminence, and that is true to the temporal reference in Mark 13.28, but the concern of both Paul and Jesus is to communicate urgency in view of the nearness of God and the shortness of time, not to predict *how* short the time is. Even Paul can be vague about that (Rom 13.11; Phil 4.5). All this eschatological material has its function in warning or encouraging individuals and groups by reference to the nearness of God. Translating such prophetic and pastoral admonitions into doctrines and predictions about the end of the world perhaps distorts them. Apocalyptic discourse about God and the world need not even be intended or understood literally (Caird 1980; Wright 1996).

It was natural for the early church to interpret Jesus’ words and also such scriptures as Daniel 7 in the light of their experience of the resurrection and the Spirit, and to infer that he would shortly return. Paul uses traditional apocalyptic imagery to express his beliefs, and his concern with present relationships and behaviour in this world is set in that context. Those who wrote apocalypses were also guided more by this-worldly political and pastoral purposes than by speculative interests. But Jesus did not write apocalypses and there is little evidence of how he imagined the future apart from his confidence in God’s present providence and ultimate victory over evil. The future eschatological aspect of Jesus’ uncommon phrase ‘the kingdom of God’ (the metaphor is scarcely to be found outside Daniel in apocalypses) is better coordinated with his understanding of God than translated into convictions about the future of the world. Unlike some modern social thinkers, his focus was on God and so this world, rather than this world and so its need of transformation. His thinking was theocentric, with all the actions that implied on behalf of the neighbour.

The evidence allows the historian to doubt whether Jesus ever made his expectations about the future very clear, or was himself particularly concerned about this. Schweitzer’s appeal to Matthew 10.23 is now generally rejected and Bultmann was driven to the apocalypses (while admitting how slender the evidence is for saying that Jesus expected the end of the world) only because he was sure that Jesus was not guided by any hope of ‘the restitution of the idealised ancient kingdom of David’ (1921: 4). E. P. Sanders (1985) on the other hand argues that this ‘Jewish restoration eschatology’ (rather than cosmic apocalypse) is the key to Jesus’ activity and preaching, whereas B. D. Chilton (1979, 1984; Chilton and Evans 1995) thinks

'the kingdom of God' means the present revelation of God in strength. Belief in the nearness of God may or may not be eschatological and can be combined with an assumption that life on earth will continue; almost everything that Jesus can be known to have said presupposes that continuation. In that case what *was* his eschatology?

Jesus takes for granted the expectation of a future resurrection and shares it with the Pharisees and most other Jews of his day (Mk 12.25). He occasionally speaks of the (last) judgment, but without any suggestion that it is imminent (Mt 11.21–4 = Lk 10.13–5; Mt 12.41f. = Lk 11.31f.). Those who fail to respond to his mission will ultimately be judged, but unlike John the Baptist Jesus emphasizes the joy and privilege of the present offer of salvation (Mt 13.16f. = Lk 10.23f.). Even the call to repent is rarely explicit, again in contrast to John, and contrary to Luke's special emphasis. It is surely implicit in Jesus' talk of God, as in all Jewish and Christian talk of God, but Jesus seems to have spread less doom and gloom than his predecessor and some of his followers, including Matthew.

Certainly he thought there would be change in the future, vindication by God for the poor and hungry, the persecuted and the bereft (Mt 5.3–10; Lk 6.20–2), and presumably he thought this eschatological reversal would be bad news for others, as Luke implies at 6.24–6. Matthew is especially emphatic about God's judgment, repeating the formula about 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' six times. But that eschatological sanction reflects Matthew's particular concern with Christian behaviour (cf. 28.20), and may not entirely catch the flavour of Jesus' message. Most of what Jesus was rightly remembered to have said concerns human behaviour, or rather human life, but it seems remarkably free of moralism, and not particularly interested in punishment. His authentic references to reward and punishment are quite conventional and it is hard to see here any key to his message.

On the other hand it is hard to doubt that when Matthew understands Jesus' phrase 'the kingdom of God (heaven)' to have a strong moral dimension he is in tune with Jesus' teaching as a whole, with its strong insistence on doing the will of God. Matthew's addition to the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (6.10, absent from Lk 11.20), sums up much of Jesus' teaching. The only question is how accurately it interprets 'the kingdom of God' and its coming. How are ethics related to eschatology in the teaching of Jesus?

Matthew seems to subordinate eschatology to ethics, making his emphasis on the last judgment serve to underline the seriousness of Jesus' moral teaching, or 'doing the will of my Father who is in heaven' (7.21; 12.50; 21.30) and 'keeping all things whatsoever I commanded you' (28.20). 'The kingdom of heaven' is Matthew's central theological idea, as it was Jesus' (4.17), but Matthew underlines its moral aspect by associating it with 'righteousness', the behaviour that God expects of God's people: 'Seek ye first (God's) kingdom and righteousness (6.33; Lk 12.20 lacks Matthew's editorial 'righteousness'); 'blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness' (5.6, 10; contrast Lk 6.21f.). John the Baptist, who Matthew makes also a preacher of the kingdom (3.2), 'came to you in the way of righteousness' (21.32), and a higher righteousness is required of those entering the kingdom of heaven (5.20). Matthew rightly understands Jesus to mean that God rules, and that to be a disciple is to respond to God and live

under God's rule. He therefore interprets 'the kingdom of God' along those lines as a present possibility and a future hope. 'Theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven' (5.3, 10). The Beatitudes, like the antitheses (5.21–48) that illustrate the higher righteousness (5.20), describe discipleship. The ten parables, which Matthew introduces with a formula about what 'the kingdom of heaven is like', show how it is to choose and live under God's rule, and Matthew himself as a Christian 'scribe disciplined for the kingdom' (13.52) draws on the tradition of Jesus' teaching, to teach what Christian discipleship involves.

This is not far from the usage of those rabbis who spoke of 'taking upon oneself the yoke of the Torah' and living according to God's will. It does justice to an important aspect of Jesus' teaching without replicating Jesus' own (probable) accentuation of the phrase 'the kingdom of God'. For Jesus the phrase signifies *God* before it signifies ethics (the will of God), though to speak of God at once involves attention to God's will, and it is not surprising that how to live is a central thrust of Jesus' teaching.

The phrase also signifies *God* before it signifies eschatology, even though to speak of God also at once involves speaking confidently of the future, and God's ultimate triumph over evil. It is *God* who rules and will rule, and Jesus' prayer is a better guide to how he thought of God than are some of his contemporaries' visions of the future destruction of the world, whether imminent or not. The nearness of God, which Jesus proclaimed (Mk 1.15) and promised (Mk 12.34), carries its own urgency and implies its own warning regardless of threats. John the Baptist may have wielded a stick, like other prophets of future judgment. Jesus celebrated what God was now doing (e.g. Mk 2.19; Mt 11.5 = Lk 7.22). John the evangelist was no doubt theologically right to conclude that the coming of the light implies judgment on those who prefer darkness because their deeds are evil (Jn 3.16–21), but the shadows that fall across Jesus' ministry stem from his opponents, not from his teaching or actions. His table-fellowship with his disciples, with outcasts, and even with his critics anticipates the messianic banquet and while some of God's people exclude themselves (Mt 8.11f.) there is no hint of vengeance or holy war against God's enemies, as at Qumran.

In prayer Jesus addressed God as 'Abba', that is, Father (Mk 14.36), and taught his disciples to do the same (Mt 6.9 = Lk 11.2; cf. Gal 4.6; Rom 8.15). Matthew sees Jesus underlining God's fatherly providence (classically expressed in Ps 103). There is no need to be anxious (Mt 6.25–34; Lk 12.22–31). God's children can ask for their bread each day confident that God loves and cares for them more than any earthly father (Mt 7.7–11 = Lk 11.9–13). Your heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field; are not you worth much more? (Mt 6.26–30).

Both versions of the Lord's Prayer and a powerful parable (Mt 18.23–35) highlight our need for God's forgiveness and the correlative importance of forgiving others – repeatedly (Mt 18.22; Lk 6.37; 17.4). Like the Beatitudes (Mt 5.3–12; Lk 6.20–2) the prayer of Jesus can be accented ethically (Manson 1931; Dodd 1970; Luz 1989) or eschatologically (Meier 1994). Both aspects are present, and both are rooted in the identity and character of God who is active in the world now, even though God's rule is at present hidden, like a seed growing secretly (Mk 4.26–32; Mt 13.24–33).

Against Matthew's tendency to moralize Jesus' proclamation of God's rule (and so subordinate eschatology to ethics), and against Schweitzer's implausible subordination of ethics to an imminent eschatological expectation (making ethics a short-term instruction for the 'meantime', an *Interimsethik*), it seems best to explain both these aspects of Jesus' teaching as arising out of his overwhelming experience of the reality and nearness of God. He shared some common Jewish beliefs and expectations about God's future dealings with the world but saw God's future impinging on the present. He perhaps explained his own celibacy by reference to his dedication to the kingdom (cf. Mt 19.12), rather than as anticipating the time when marriage would be no more (Mk 12.25). Unlike Paul in 1 Corinthians 7.29–31 he seems not to have based his argument on the imminent passing away of the form of this world. Like the Qumran covenanters (CD 4.21; 11Q Temple 57.17) he was critical of the current practice of easy divorce, perhaps because it was often for the sake of remarriage (cf. Mt 5.32f.; Lk 16.18), but this was apparently based on his clear conviction about marriage and the will of God in creation (Mk 10.2–12; Mt 19.3–9) rather than the principle that the eschatological time will be like the primal time, or any abstract theory of indissolubility.

Jesus' severe warnings about the dangers of wealth (Mk 10.23–5; Lk 6.24; 12.13–21; 16.19–31), stem from its capacity to distract people from God's rule. For some this involves the call to discipleship (Mk 10.21), and that involves renunciation (Mk 10.28). This will be rewarded (v. 29). It also involves suffering, perhaps even martyrdom (Mk 8.34–6), and vindication (Mk 13.9–13). Not everyone is called to total renunciation (Lk 19.8f.), but total generosity is required from all. It follows from the character of God (Mt 5.42–5; Lk 6.30–8).

Teaching about discipleship is naturally very common in all four gospels, since Jesus both called and taught his disciples and these preserved his memory and teachings, and used them to instruct subsequent followers who had never known Jesus in the flesh. The cost of discipleship is stressed (Lk 14.28–33), including sometimes divisions within families (Mt 10.35f.; Lk 12.52f.; 14.26), perhaps reflecting his own experience (Mk 3.32f.). Renunciation of status is also characteristic of discipleship (Mk 9.34f.; 10.35–45) and this led Matthew's church to draw conclusions about Christian ministry (23.8–12), reflecting also on Jesus' sayings about status reversal (see also 18.4; Lk 14.11; 18.14).

Like Hillel, Jesus could sum up his moral teaching in the golden rule (Mt 7.12), and like other Jewish writings (*Testament of Issachar* 5.2) in the twofold commandment to love (Mk 12.30f., quoting Deut 6.5 and Lev 19.18). He broadens love of neighbour to include love of enemies (Mt 5.43f. = Lk 6.27f.), and the identification of the neighbour in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10.29–37) is unforgettable. Again, such merciful behaviour, reflected in reports of Jesus' own compassion (Mk 1.41; 6.34; 8.2; Mt 20.34; Lk 7.13) is motivated and shown to be self-evidently right by reference to the character of God (cf. the parables of Lk 15). The authentic stance of humans before God is humility (Mk 10.15; Mt 18.4; 25.12) and Matthew (like Paul) saw Jesus himself as an example (11.29).

For any Jew the revelation and measure of God's will was of course the law. Mark represents Jesus as sitting loose to cultic demands, to the improbable point even of abandoning the food laws (7.19b), or at least (in tune with Paul) implying that the

love commandment fulfils the law (12.31, 33). Matthew, on the other hand, is careful to avoid any suggestion that the written law is abrogated (5.17f.; 12.1–8; 15.11–20), even though he too recognizes that Jesus was critical of unwritten traditions (15.2–9). Matthew is surely correct about Jesus' saying that 'it is not what goes into the mouth but what comes out from the mouth) [i.e. from the heart] that defiles a person' (v. 11). This implies not abolition but that morals are more important than ritual purity (cf. also the priest and Levite who do not risk impurity by contact with a dead body in the parable of the Good Samaritan). Matthew's quotation of Hosea 6.6, 'I desire mercy and not [i.e. more than] sacrifice', at 9.13 and 12.7 is surely appropriate, if not original. Whether Matthew 23.23 (cf. Lk 11.42), 'these things [tithing] you ought to have done, without neglecting the others [the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faith]', originated with Jesus or with some of his more legalistic followers there can be no doubt that Jesus took the law of Moses for granted (cf. Mk 1.44).

Mark's observation that Jesus 'taught them with authority and not as the scribes' (1.22; cf. Mt 7.29), however, rings true to the immediacy of Jesus' 'but I say unto you'. The freshness of his parables confirms this confident independence in saying how things are. They are no more easily reduced to teaching illustrations than those of the later rabbis. His rigorous teaching on divorce relativizes Deuteronomy 24 on appeal to the message of the Torah in Genesis, and his demand for total honesty (Mt 5.33–7) makes oaths redundant, but none of this sharpening of the law should be taken as a fundamental criticism of it. Even the liberal saying that 'the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath' (Mk 2.27, omitted by Matthew and Luke) can be read as repeating the humane justification for the fourth commandment given at Deuteronomy 5.14 (unlike Ex 20.11): your servants need a rest as well as you. The startling injunction to 'let the dead bury their own dead' (Mt 8.22 = Lk 9.60) gives priority to discipleship, but is not intended to abrogate the fifth commandment, which is defended at Mark 7.9–13.

Much of Jesus' moral teaching must have been *ad hoc*, in response to questions and problems. As a charismatic teacher and eschatological prophet Jesus stated God's will in absolute terms, sometimes shocking his hearers into attention by his use of hyperbole. When Matthew in particular repeats and reapplies this teaching as guidance for his Christian community a change of texture becomes apparent. The legislator needs to be practical as the prophet does not. And yet Jesus' teaching does strike the reader as generally practical, even common sense. It was not intended to be an impossible ethic, persuading pietists of their need for grace by setting an unrealistic moral standard. 'Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect' (Mt 5.48; contrast Lk 6.36: merciful) sounds like moral perfectionism, but the Aramaic behind the Greek (cf. also Mt 19.21) probably means 'whole' or undivided, having integrity.

The original contexts of Jesus' teaching may explain in part why he did not develop a social or political ethic. When his injunction to resist not evil (Mt 5.39) is made the basis of Christian pacifism a major extension has been made in its application, whether or not legitimately. The advice to turn the other cheek gains its wider Christian application from the whole story of Jesus, culminating in his crucifixion, not from the saying in isolation. Attempts have been made to credit Jesus

with a social programme (most recently Horsley 1987) and to discuss 'the politics of Jesus' (Yoder 1972) and these contain important insights. If the emergence of Christianity is considered valid, new applications of Jesus' teachings are also valid. But Jesus himself addressed individuals, even in crowds, whatever his possible programme for Israel. Religious faith (see Jeremias 1971: 159–66, on what Jesus taught about faith) is inescapably individual: nobody can do it for you.

Faith also has social implications, and God's covenant with his people comes first in Judaism. How far Jesus emphasized this is disputed. His attitude to the Temple, the real and symbolic centre of Judaism in his day, is not entirely clear, as the different suggestions of E. P. Sanders and B. D. Chilton (above p. 246–7) show. Like Meyer (1979) and Horsley (1987) these scholars think he had a clearly defined programme. Others are not so sure. H. J. Cadbury (1937: [ch. 6](#)) observed that we are prone to impose our expectations of clear goals on Jesus. His obedience to God's will need not have been so specific. He spelled out the social implications of faith only at the level of interpersonal relations, not in a theory about Israel. Too much has perhaps been read into his undoubtedly significant choice of twelve disciples.

Perhaps an appeal to the nation as such may be implicit in his decision to go up to Jerusalem shortly before Passover? He must have known the risk and probably expected to die as a prophet (Mk 6.4) in Jerusalem (Lk 13.33) – and to be vindicated by God (Mk 8.31; etc.). If like the Baptist he was going to be silenced anyway, why not make his last stand at the centre, even in the Temple precincts? Just as his sense of the shortness of time, in sending the twelve on a mission, might have stemmed from his expectation of imminent arrest, so too here. The urgency of the invitation and the necessity of responding are expressed also in the parable of the Great Supper (Matthew 22.2–10; Luke 14.16–24) and explain the eschatological imagery at Matthew 9.37, 10.15 = Lk 10.12. At the Last Supper he probably anticipated imminent arrest or death (in the next twenty-four hours, before he could celebrate the Passover with them), rather than (as is often claimed) an imminent end of the world. To speak of the God of Israel is to speak of the end as well as the creation of the world, but the focus of Jesus' preaching and activity was the present moment in which men and women are confronted with God who is gracious. That is why it could later be described by Mark as good news from God, good news about God, the good news that is God (Mk 1.14f.).

HOPES AND MEMORIES

In *The Genius of Shakespeare* (1997) Jonathan Bate recognizes how very little we know directly about the bard, and yet contrives to reconstruct a historical picture by drawing on what is known of his setting or 'pre-history' (the Elizabethan stage), and what can be inferred from his 'after-life', the history of his influence. The New Testament, constantly echoing the Old Testament and so generating a 'biblical world', has much to say about the 'after-life' of Jesus that is without historical analogy. But its hymnic and credal claims that Jesus is now 'first-begotten from the dead' (Col. 1.18), 'risen on the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Cor 15.3; cf. v. 20), super-exalted Lord (Phil 2.9–11), are part of his 'after-life' in the historian Bate's sense as well as having Christian theological meanings.

It is not the task of this presentation to assess what Christians confess, the mystery of God's having vindicated Jesus. However, whether truth or illusion, the subsequent convictions and activities of his followers do echo Jesus and so contribute to a larger picture of Jesus in history, as well as (more significantly) to the theological portraits, and they are clearly a part of the biblical world. The history of Jesus, tentatively reconstructed from the records of his followers who became worshippers, would not be complete without mention of the transition from an earthly life and death to the emergence and development of a new form of Judaism focused on this Messiah.

Throughout the preceding discussion this transition has been the major factor in assessing the sources and the main reason for reluctance to rely on what they say where the record most clearly reflects the interests of the later community: in claims that the scriptures are being fulfilled in Jesus, especially in his passion (cf. 1 Cor 15.3), and in Christological titles and formulations.

That caution might seem excessive when it leads to scepticism about some passages which see Jesus as the Son of Man. It is hard to doubt (but it has occasionally been doubted) that Jesus spoke of himself using this Aramaic and Hebrew phrase, but it is also hard to believe that he used it in all the different ways the gospels suggest. The gospels naturally see Jesus as the Son of Man in his earthly activity, his passion and resurrection, and his eschatological coming on the clouds, but this combination of meanings is more understandable from the perspective of the early church than on the lips of Jesus. Most critics have felt it necessary to choose between Jesus calling himself 'son of man' in a simple earthly sense (Mt 8.20 = Lk 9.57; Mt 11.19 = Lk 7.34) and his referring to the heavenly Son of Man of Daniel 7.13 (Mk 13.26; 14.62 and other less explicit passages). A generation ago many scholars accepted some of the latter (Mk 8.38; Lk 12.8) whether holding that Jesus referred to himself or to someone else; now many prefer the former option and explain the latter as post-resurrection reflection of Jesus in the light of the Daniel stories of suffering and vindication. We know the early church looked forward to Jesus returning in glory to carry out God's judgment and vindicate his persecuted followers. Jesus' own expectations are impossible to pin down with any certainty, though he must have been confident that God would vindicate his cause somehow (Barrett 1967) and the eschatological language of resurrection was available to him in his Jewish tradition.

Jesus spoke of others rising and being raised in the judgment (Mt 11.41f.), and may also have spoken of his own vindication in these terms (cf. Mk 8.31; 9.31; 10.33), even if the time specification (after three days, on the third day) reflects the Easter experience. His followers were clear (after some initial doubt) that God had already vindicated Jesus, and that the new age which was breaking into the old in his activity had now dawned, even though its visible manifestation was still to come. They themselves lived in the 'meanwhile', waiting and remembering, living by the norms of the new age in the experience of the Spirit, and sharing their memories and hopes with other Jews, and soon with Gentiles too.

They searched their scriptures, trying to make sense of what they had experienced by interpreting it in the light of that tradition of God's word in prophecy and promise to Israel, and also with the help of current eschatological expectations. Whether or not he called himself 'the Messiah' he certainly saw himself as a prophet with a decisive mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt 10.5), and his followers

soon called him God's Messiah or 'anointed one', a title with various connotations, which in Greek rapidly became a name: Christ. The inscription on the cross 'king of the Jews' was not a title adopted by the early church, but Jesus' execution as a messianic (political) figure could have encouraged that equation after his vindication (cf. Acts 2.36). The expectation of a 'Son of David' or Davidic Messiah was also one of the roots of the title Son of God (cf. 2 Sam 7.14; Ps 2.7). Its early application to Jesus was perhaps reinforced by the memory of his intimacy with God in prayer.

Within a few decades (in 112 CE) we hear of Pliny, a Roman governor in Bithynia (northern Turkey), reporting to his emperor Trajan that groups of Christians 'assembled before daylight to recite a form of words [or sing a hymn?] to Christ as a god and bound themselves *sacramento* to moral behaviour' (*Epistles* 10.96). Of course he executed those who would not desist, but the question for historians is how this elevation of Jesus came about.

The cultic context specified by Pliny was certainly important (Bousset, 1970), as the early Aramaic phrase quoted by Paul at 1 Corinthians 16.22 and the Christ hymn at Philippians 2.6–11 indicate. The experience of the Spirit was vital, and sometimes the distinction between the risen Christ and the Spirit is unclear (Rom 8.9–11; 2 Cor 3.17). But the identification of Jesus as Lord (Rom 10.9; 1 Cor 12.3), and the eucharistic *anamnesis* (remembrance, 1 Cor 11.24f.) of the passion, involved the early church's *memory* of Jesus. It was these memories that a generation or two later were stabilized in the New Testament gospels and it is natural to scan them too for anything about Jesus that might help explain the emergence (or continuation) of the Jesus movement after his shameful death. It is not plausible to credit all that followed to the account of the disciples' conviction of his resurrection. What mattered to them was the *person* whom God had vindicated or exalted, not that event in isolation.

The *authority* of Jesus is a recurring feature of the synoptic record of Jesus' ministry, universalized by Matthew at 28.18. Perhaps it was this that led a few Galileans who were more prosperous than some to 'leave all and follow' him (Mk 10.28). The loyalty that he inspired survived the shock of his arrest and initial dispersal of his disciples (Mk 14.50) and presumably tells something of his character. It may also say something of the character of their response and help to explain the persistence of that loyalty. But the particular mix of hopes and aspirations, economic circumstances, and the impact of a charismatic personality, is impossible to analyse on the basis of such fragmentary sources. The historian is reduced to informed guesswork. Possible factors can and must be assembled, but any construction will be tentative. Jesus was clearly a wise teacher and may have been soon seen as child or envoy of wisdom (Lk 7.35; Mt 23.37–9 = Lk 13.34f.). Was this how he came to be seen (Col 1.15; Heb 1.2f., cf. Jn 1.1–18) as the wisdom of God incarnate (Mt 23.34; cf. Lk 11.49; Mt 11.28–30; cf. Sir 51.23–6)?

The opposition Jesus evoked is another source of possible insight. The historian can only regret that these opponents did not leave contemporary records. They inhabit the biblical world as negative shadows, leaving it to the historian's imagination to do justice to their positive efforts to maintain an uneasy peace and sustain the traditional religion in times that were difficult enough without a Galilean charismatic exciting this volatile people.

Jesus belongs to *history*, the history of first-century Galilee and Judaea, the history of his followers over two thousand years, and the history of the cultures that have been shaped or influenced by the memories preserved in the gospels and by the countless lives inspired by these records. His impact on history, however, has been mediated mainly through the gospels, read mostly in religious contexts. These four familiar versions combine in fresh configurations as the kaleidoscope fragments are mirrored afresh in the minds of new readers. Even his influence on the wider culture stems from this *literature*.

The literary phenomenon one might call the 'biblical Jesus' or 'Jesus of the gospels' would not have emerged without that extraordinary historical person named Jesus. But this first-century Jewish teacher and healer is significant today, for Christians and for many non-Christians, only because he was taken up into the symbolic world of his followers and others influenced by them. Most of what he said might have been said by many wisdom teachers and neither Paul nor John, the two greatest theological minds of the New Testament, seem concerned to preserve it accurately. What he did and suffered is not without precedent either. He was (like every human being) unique, and doubtless more original and independent than most, but what matters finally is that his words and deeds and sufferings have been taken up into a story of God's engagement with the world, retold four times in the New Testament and endlessly outside it.

The Fourth Evangelist spoke for later followers when he insisted that the Jewish Messiah Jesus, who came from the Father and returned to the Father, is the definitive revelation of God: No-one has ever seen God (1.18), but to know Jesus is to know God (8.19), to have seen Jesus is to have seen the Father (14.9) and to reject him is to turn from the light (3.19; cf. 12.44–50). Where 'biblical' refers to the *Christian* scriptures, the central subject of the 'biblical world' of symbols is this contingent historical figure. Whether the historian's honest efforts provide a ladder into that world or a barrier against it remains an open question. The expectations of some critics and advocates of Christianity alike have proved overoptimistic and misplaced. But their efforts and those of many sober historians have provided some clarifications. Those who think of the past in modern historical terms have found that helpful.

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CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

PAUL



David G. Horrell

INTRODUCTION

Paul is a man of enormous influence, a religious genius whose capacity for creative thought and original writing has made him a mountain¹ on the landscape of Christian history. He has been hailed as ‘the real founder of Christianity’ (Nietzsche),² though whether that is a title of acclamation or condemnation depends on the standpoint of the one who labels Paul thus. For some, Paul is responsible for perverting the religion of Jesus the Jew into a Hellenistic salvation-religion that Jesus would hardly have recognized, let alone approved.³ For others, Paul is the one who most clearly perceived the meaning of the death and resurrection of Christ and most energetically spread the gospel message among the non-Jewish inhabitants of the Roman empire. For some, Paul is the bearer of a message of grace and liberation; for others, he is at least partly responsible for a history of anti-Semitism and for keeping the downtrodden firmly in their place. But even if Paul was not the founder of Christianity – and there are many reasons for rejecting that tendentious claim – the immensity of his influence cannot be denied.

During his lifetime, however, Paul was not as prominent as the verdict of history might lead us to assume. Positions of greater eminence and authority were held by the ‘pillars’ of the Jerusalem church, the apostles Peter, James and John, who had been disciples of Jesus (cf. Gal. 2:2, 9; Holmberg 1978: 14–34). And in the early years of his missionary activity, Paul was almost certainly acting under the auspices and commission of the church at Antioch, possibly ‘as assistant to Barnabas’ (Murphy-O’Connor 1996: 96; cf. Taylor 1992: 87–95; Acts 11:26 – 15:40). Yet it is Paul, and none of these other characters, who warrants a chapter in this book. The reason for this is not hard to discern: Paul’s enduring influence is primarily due to his weighty theological letters that are preserved in the New Testament (cf. 2 Cor. 10:10). There are thirteen such letters attributed to Paul, but just one of them – his letter to the Romans – far surpasses in influence that of the New Testament epistles attributed to Peter, James and John combined.

Those epistles written by Paul are obviously the most important source for understanding him. There is a large scholarly majority in favour of the view that Paul did not write the so-called Pastoral Epistles (1–2 Timothy, Titus), nor Ephesians;

arguments for and against Paul's authorship of Colossians and 2 Thessalonians are more finely balanced, though many doubt that they are Paul's own work. That leaves us with Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon as the primary sources for the study of Paul. The book of Acts, written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke, probably twenty to thirty years after Paul's death, is also an important source for the study of Paul's life and work, though its reliability is much debated. Undoubtedly the author of Acts, whom I shall call Luke, has theological tendencies that shape the picture he presents, but the historical value of his work should not be ignored. The evidence of Acts must nevertheless be used with due circumspection.

Also important for understanding Paul are the numerous and varied sources that can further our understanding of the social, cultural and religious context in which Paul lived and worked. Jewish sources are vital to understanding the varieties of Judaism that existed at the time of Paul and the particular sect of Judaism to which Paul originally belonged; other sources enable us to appreciate something of the wider political and philosophical context for Paul's Christian mission.

PAUL'S CONTEXT: RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL

Paul was first and foremost a Jew; or, in his own words, 'of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews' (Phil. 3:5; cf. Rom. 11:1; 2 Cor. 11:22). More specifically, Paul tells us that he was a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5), a member of a grouping within first-century Judaism whose members sought to practise holiness by careful adherence to both written and oral Torah (see Schürer 1979: 388–403; Saldarini 1992). This Pharisaic identity almost certainly confirms Luke's information that Paul was educated in Jerusalem, since Pharisaic training seems to have taken place only in that city (Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:4–5; Hengel 1991: 27; Lüdemann 1989: 240). But whether Paul went to Jerusalem in his early childhood, adolescence or early adulthood is open to debate (see Hengel 1991: 2–3, 18–39; Murphy-O'Connor 1996: 46–51). It is also uncertain whether Paul was widowed, divorced, or had always remained single (the first of these is perhaps most likely – see Jeremias 1926, 1929; Murphy-O'Connor 1996: 62–5). However, it is clear that he was 'unattached' when he wrote his letters (1 Cor. 7:7–8; 9:5).

One thing about Paul that we learn only from Acts is that he was from Tarsus, the capital city of Cilicia (Acts 9:11; 21:39; 22:3; see [Figure 41.1](#)), though this detail about Paul's life is hardly ever doubted (Hengel 1991: 1). Being born and probably educated, at least initially, in Tarsus, Paul was thus a member of the Jewish diaspora, educated in Greek and specifically in the Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures, the Septuagint (LXX; see [chapter 12](#) above), even though his Pharisaic training also ties him closely into Palestinian Judaism. Moreover, like other Jews of his day, Paul was influenced by popular philosophical discussion from a range of sources, as well as by his specifically Jewish heritage (see e.g. Malherbe 1989; Deming 1995; Downing 1998). If Luke is right that Paul was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25–2) – again, this is not something Paul ever mentions, and it is doubted by some (e.g. Stegemann 1987; Roetzel 1998: 19–22) – this was probably inherited



Figure 41.1 Map showing places and areas mentioned in the text.

through his family, granted perhaps to his father or grandfather on release from slavery (see Hengel 1991: 4–15; Rapske 1994: 71–112; Riesner 1998: 147–56). The name Paul uses in his letters is his Latin *cognomen* Paulus, and he does not himself mention his Jewish name ‘Saul’ (Hebrew: *Sha’ul*; Greek: *Saoul/Saulos*), which appears frequently in the first half of Acts (e.g. 7:58; 8:1; 12:25; note 13:9).

These last details remind us that Paul was a citizen, or at least an inhabitant, of the Roman empire, and the structure of empire was the dominant social and political *datum* for both Jews and Christians, indeed all inhabitants of the Mediterranean region, at the time. The impact of this socio-political reality can be seen in Paul’s references to imprisonments and beatings (Rom. 16:7; 2 Cor. 11:23; Phil. 1:7–17; Phlmn 1, 9, 23; he also received lashes as synagogue discipline on several occasions; see 2 Cor. 11:24), as well as in his advice to his converts on issues like slavery (1 Cor. 7:21–4) and their attitudes to the imperial authorities (Rom. 13:1–7). In the end, the cost of his work as a Christian missionary in the Roman empire was his life, since he was almost certainly executed in Rome, perhaps along with Peter, towards the end of Nero’s reign (c. 60–7 CE; cf. 1 Clem. 5.2–7; Eusebius, *HE* 2.25.5).

FROM JESUS TO PAUL: PRE-PAULINE CHRISTIANITY

Despite his polemical insistence that he received his gospel by divine revelation and not from any human being (Gal. 1:11–12), and despite the personal nature of his encounter with the risen Christ, it is clear that Paul owed much to those who were believers in Christ before him (cf. 1 Cor. 15.3–9). He himself tells us of a visit to

Jerusalem to ‘get acquainted with Peter’⁴ when, we may be sure, he learnt something about the historical Jesus and about the gospel as Peter understood it. Paul also spent some time at Antioch (in Syria), operating as a missionary with Antioch as his base. He did not found the church at Antioch and must have learnt substantially from the teaching and practice already established there. For these reasons, and to show that Paul was not ‘the founder of Christianity’, it is important very briefly to sketch the progress of Christianity in its earliest period, before Paul’s ‘conversion’ and well before his letters, although this period spans only a few years.⁵

After the death and resurrection of Jesus – and whatever ‘happened’ at the resurrection, it is clear that early Christianity is based on the *belief* in its occurrence – some of his disciples, including leading figures such as Peter, James and John, remained in Jerusalem, where they met regularly with fellow believers in Jesus as Messiah/Christ. At this point in time, however, such believers were all Jews and loyally continued their Jewish religious practice (Acts 2:46; 3:1). While the details of the events that followed are much debated, Luke’s account in Acts indicates that there were divisions and differences within this earliest Christian community, notably between the ‘Hebrews’ and the ‘Hellenists’ (Acts 6:1) and that, due to persecution, at least some of the believers were dispersed from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1–4; 11:19). Many believe that it was primarily the so-called Hellenists who were persecuted and dispersed, and who held a theology more critical of Jewish law and temple than the so-called Hebrews,⁶ though the tidiness of this division has been sharply questioned by Craig Hill (1992).⁷ Whatever the details, with the scattering of Christians from Jerusalem, within a few years the gospel began to be shared with non-Jews (Acts 11:20–6).⁸ Moreover, in at least some places these Gentile converts (often already Jewish sympathizers or ‘godfearers’) were not expected to become Jewish, that is, to adopt all the marks of Jewish identity and obedience to the Jewish law (circumcision, food laws, sabbath observance, etc.). This development was absolutely crucial for the future character of Christianity, and was the cause of heated debate (in which Paul looms large) for decades, even centuries, afterwards.⁹

Antioch was certainly one place where the gatherings of Christians included both Jews and Gentiles, without the latter being expected to become Jews, and it is not insignificant that a few years after his conversion Paul was based at Antioch for some time as a Christian missionary. How far this development had taken place prior to Paul’s joining the community at Antioch and how far Paul may have been involved in it elsewhere is difficult to say, since we know so little about the earliest church at Antioch and about Paul’s activities between his conversion and the first of his letters, a period of some years (see below). However, it is clear that the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Antioch and elsewhere, and the inclusion of Gentiles as well as Jews within the company of Christians, took place independently of Paul, and well before he wrote any of his letters (see further Riesner 1998: 108–24).

Nevertheless, Paul’s commitment specifically to the task of evangelizing the Gentiles and the arguments he formulated to justify their inclusion within the Christian movement without their becoming Jews were of decisive significance for the long-term development and identity of Christianity. Paul and Barnabas were sent as representatives of the Antioch church to the gathering in Jerusalem to discuss precisely the issue of Gentile converts (Acts 15:1–29; Gal. 2:1–10¹⁰), and when

disagreement later flared at Antioch itself, Paul argued vigorously for the acceptance of Gentiles without their obedience to the demands of Jewish law (Gal. 2:11–21).¹¹ Although Paul may have lost the argument at Antioch, he presented it once more, at greater length and with considerable heat and passion, in his letter to the Galatians, and, indeed, at even greater length but without so much heat, in Romans.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that while Paul turned out to be a pivotal person in these crucial debates, formulating in detail the arguments on which the Gentiles' acceptance *as Gentiles* was based, he was not a solitary or unique figure. Paul owed much to his predecessors, from and with whom he learnt much about the nature of belief in Christ. Furthermore, though it is often forgotten, Paul operated within a wide circle of co-workers (see Rom. 16:3, 9, 21; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25; 4:3; etc.), some of whom are named as co-authors in some of the epistles we tend to think of solely as Paul's (see 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; Phlmn 1).

PAUL'S CALL TO APOSTLESHIP AND MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

How did Paul come to be arguing about the place of Gentile converts in the church in the first place? He had not known or followed Jesus during his lifetime, nor, as far as we know, was he converted directly by hearing the message announced by early Christian preachers. In the earliest years of the Christian movement, Paul tells us, he was a zealous persecutor of the church (Gal. 1:13, 23; 1 Cor. 15:9; Phil. 3:6). Precisely how and why a Pharisee engaged in such persecution is not altogether clear,¹² but what is indisputable is that a zealous persecutor became an equally zealous proponent of the gospel of Christ. Paul never recounts in detail the nature of the experience that caused this volte-face (contrast the lengthy accounts in Acts 9:1–30; 22:3–21; 26:9–23) but he does make clear that it was a revelation, a 'seeing', of the risen Christ that was the foundation of his call to be an apostle of Christ to the Gentiles (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; Gal. 1:12–16), and that this experience took place near Damascus, as Luke more famously reports (Gal. 1:17; cf. 2 Cor. 11:32). Paul describes this call in a manner reminiscent of the calling of Jeremiah and of the 'servant' of deuterio-Isaiah (Jer. 1:5; Isa. 49:1–6; cf. Gal. 1:15–16); in this sense he is not 'converted' at all, but rather commissioned to a new task by the God whom he has served all his life (cf. Stendahl 1976: 7–23). On the other hand, however, although Paul certainly sees his Christian faith as a continuation of the biblical story of God's dealings with Israel and the world, the radical change in perspective and the consequent reinterpretation and re-valuation make the term 'conversion' apposite (cf. Phil. 3:4–14).¹³

Paul understood this conversion experience, which probably took place around 33 CE, a few years after the crucifixion of Jesus,¹⁴ not only as a revelation of Christ to him, but also, at least in retrospect, as his own commission specifically to be apostle to the Gentiles, a role he later affirms in conjunction with Peter's different commission as apostle to the Jews (Gal. 1:15–16; 2:7–8). In the years immediately after his conversion, then, years about which we know so very little,¹⁵ it seems likely that Paul was involved in spreading the message about Christ and making converts

(Murphy-O'Connor 1996: 82), though on what basis is debatable.¹⁶ For about three years he was in Arabia and Damascus (Gal. 1:17). Then he went up to Jerusalem for his first meeting with Peter (Gal. 1:18; c.37 CE). The next nine years were probably spent in activity as a missionary based in Antioch, alongside, or perhaps even under the direction of, Barnabas (Murphy-O'Connor 1996: 96). From around 46 CE, on Murphy-O'Connor's reckoning, Paul became an independent missionary, and began an extensive journey that took him through Galatia, Macedonia, and to Corinth (see [Figure 41.1](#)). Fourteen years after his first visit to Jerusalem, in about 51 CE, he returned there again, this time for the 'conference' called to discuss the issue of Gentile converts and the requirements to be placed upon them (see above; Gal. 2:1–10). After this conference Paul undertook another extensive tour, returning first to Antioch, then moving on to Ephesus, Macedonia, Illyricum and Corinth, before returning once more to Jerusalem with the proceeds of his long-standing collection project – money raised from the Pauline congregations for the 'poor among the saints in Jerusalem' (Rom. 15:25–6).¹⁷ After that he undertook a somewhat less voluntary journey, as a prisoner, to Rome, where he may have remained for some time before being executed under Nero some time in the 60s CE. Whether he made his hoped-for visit to Spain (Rom. 15:24) between his first arrival in Rome and his later execution there is possible but seems unlikely, for there is no direct evidence of such a visit.¹⁸

Whatever the details of his travels and their dates – and the conventional picture of Paul's three missionary journeys is, as John Knox has pointed out, based upon the evidence of Acts more than on that of the epistles (Knox 1987: 25–6) – Paul travelled many thousands of miles, enduring all the dangers of travel: shipwreck, robbery, lack of sleep, hunger and thirst, not to mention punishments by both Roman and Jewish authorities (2 Cor 11:24–9). He did so because he believed he had a crucial role to play – and one he was divinely compelled to play (1 Cor. 9:16–17) – in making the gospel known among the Gentiles (Rom. 15:18–24), so fulfilling his part in the divinely orchestrated drama that was reaching its final culmination. Once the full number of the Gentiles had come in, Paul believed, Israel would then be saved, and God's plan of mercy for humanity could finally be brought to fruition (Rom. 11:25–32), the last enemy of God destroyed (1 Cor. 15:24–6), and the renewed creation liberated to share in the glorious freedom of God's redeemed children (Rom. 8:19–25). And all this, Paul was convinced, lay just around the corner.

These theological convictions motivated Paul and undergirded what he sought to achieve as apostle to the Gentiles. To understand him, therefore, we must attempt to understand his theology, and the message he announced as he travelled round the cities of the Roman empire.¹⁹

THE HEART OF PAUL'S THEOLOGY: CENTRAL THEMES

One of the difficulties inhibiting the quest for the heart of Pauline theology is that Paul never wrote a summary either of his theology or of his missionary message. His letters are all, including Romans,²⁰ shaped by the contingent circumstances of the communities he is addressing and hence are enormously varied. For some the

differences lead to the conclusion that Paul was not consistent (Räsänen 1983), while others posit development in his thought over time (Dodd 1934; Hübner 1984). Many, however, consider that Paul was a coherent thinker, even though his expression varies according to situation (Beker 1980, 1990) and even if he reasons 'backwards', from 'solution to plight' (E. P. Sanders 1977: 442–7, 474–51; see below).

It is not easy, then, to express concisely what lies at the centre of Paul's theology. Much of the modern debate revolves around two opposing poles. The first, which finds its roots primarily in Martin Luther's interpretation of Paul, claims that the idea of 'justification by faith' is the key to Paul's gospel. The guilty and undeserving sinner finds unexpected forgiveness from a gracious God. The dominant imagery is juristic or legal: the acquittal of the guilty. The second pole, whose most famous modern exponent is Albert Schweitzer, is the notion of participation in Christ. Schweitzer argued, contrary to Luther, that the mystical notion of 'being-in-Christ' was the key to understanding Pauline teaching: 'once grasped it gives the clue to the whole' (1953: 3). For Schweitzer, in a way 'incomprehensible' to modern people, Paul 'speaks of living men [*sic*] as having already died and risen again with Christ' (1953: 18). These two alternatives remain prominent in much recent discussion, although proponents of either view seek more nuanced ways of expressing their ideas – such as Morna Hooker's notion of 'interchange' (Hooker 1990). E. P. Sanders, for example, insists that 'the "participationist" way of thinking brings us closer to the heart of Paul's thought than the juristic', though he rightly maintains that the two 'sets of terminology' serve to 'interpret' and 'correct' each other (1977: 520; cf. 502–8; 1991: 74). The language of sacrifice and acquittal is certainly present in Paul (Rom. 3:23–6; 4:24–5; 5:6–9; 1 Cor. 5:7; 15:3) – so this theme should not be denied – but Sanders is right, I think, to emphasize the centrality for Paul of the language of identification, or participation, 'with' or 'in' Christ (e.g. Rom. 6:1–11; 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:14–21; Gal. 2:19–20). It is by dying with Christ that the believer is freed from the dominion of sin, and by living in Christ that she or he begins anew as a person with a new identity, a new creation (see further below).

One attempt to circumvent the often polarized debate is that of J. C. Beker (1980; 1990), who argues that at root Paul is an 'apocalyptic theologian' whose thought revolves around the conviction that in Christ God has acted decisively and in a way that demonstrates that the end of time is near. For Beker, 'the real center of Paul's gospel lies in the lordship of Christ as it anticipates the final triumph of God' (1990: 92). According to Beker, neither mystical nor juristic language can rightly be elevated as more fundamental than the other; rather, Paul uses various symbols and themes according to context, which are 'analogous to the coherent field of interlocking circles on the Olympic logo' (Beker 1990: 114).

Certainly Beker has valuably drawn attention to the fact that Paul is a *theocentric* theologian (1980: 362–7; 1990: 21–4, 115). Although his gospel is focused on the death and resurrection of Christ, Paul is always clear that this is the work of *God*, that God is the one whose saving purposes for creation are being worked out and brought to fruition. One need only read, say, Romans 3:21–31, or 1 Corinthians 15:27–8, to see how clearly God is the author of all that Paul describes. And this God is, of course, the God of Abraham and Moses, the God whose dealings with

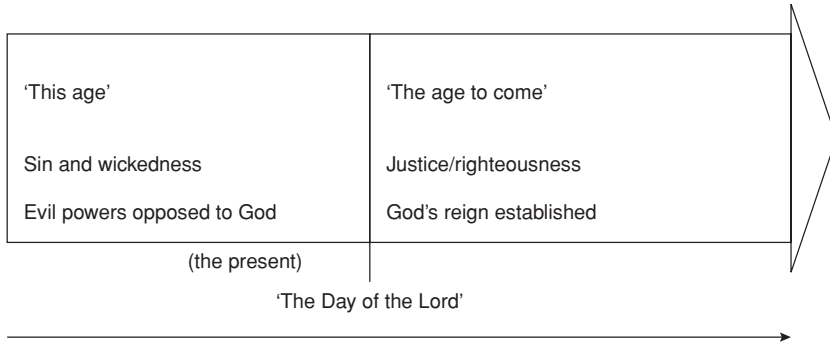


Figure 41.2 Jewish eschatology. Adapted from Davis 1995: 18 by permission of The Edwin Mellen Press. (Cf. further Davis 1995: 16–24.)

his people Israel are recorded in the Hebrew Bible. Paul is quite convinced that it is the promises of God to Abraham – the ‘father’ of God’s people the Jews – which have been fulfilled in Christ, even if he sometimes uses some rather clever exegesis to establish this (e.g. Gal. 3:16; cf. Gen. 12:2–3; 13:15–16; 15:3–6; 17:4–8). The act of God in raising Christ from death, then, is the decisive act of Israel’s God, which demonstrates that the end is near. Thus Paul’s thought is fundamentally eschatological – orientated towards ‘the last things’. The structure of Jewish eschatological hope can be broadly summarized in terms of a contrast between ‘this (evil) age’ (cf. Gal. 1:4) and ‘the age to come’, with the day of the Lord expected to mark the establishment of the latter (see e.g. Joel 2; Mal. 4:1–6; 4 *Ezra* 7:113; 8:52; Matt. 12:32; Mark 10:30; [Figure 41.2](#)). This structure was adopted and altered by Paul and the early Christians, who believed that Christ’s coming, and specifically his resurrection, marked the ‘beginning of the end’: somehow, the decisive and long-awaited intervention of God had happened, but had not yet happened! For believers in Christ, who had died to sin and begun a new life in the power of the Spirit, who were already new creations, the present was a time of tension, an interim time ‘between the ages’ (see [Figure 41.3](#); cf. Dunn 1998a: 462–6). The time of tension, of groaning, suffering and waiting, was, however, expected to be short; for the day of the Lord would soon come, when the return of Christ would signal the final victory of God and salvation for his people.

We may then attempt to summarize Paul’s gospel briefly, though virtually every phrase could be, and often has been, the subject of extended and intricate discussion. The one true God, the God of the Hebrew Bible, has fulfilled his promise to Abraham – to bless all the nations of the earth through him (Gen. 12:3) – in Jesus Christ, who was sent by God as a human being, to die for the sins of humanity. God raised him from death and exalted him as Lord, the firstborn of a new creation, that, in him, all who have faith might also die to sin, to their former lives, and live as holy people in the power of the Spirit, which is given to all who believe. The completion of the process of salvation is near, when the mysterious plan of God to show mercy to all and to restore the whole creation will finally come to fruition, and when believers will live with the Lord forever.

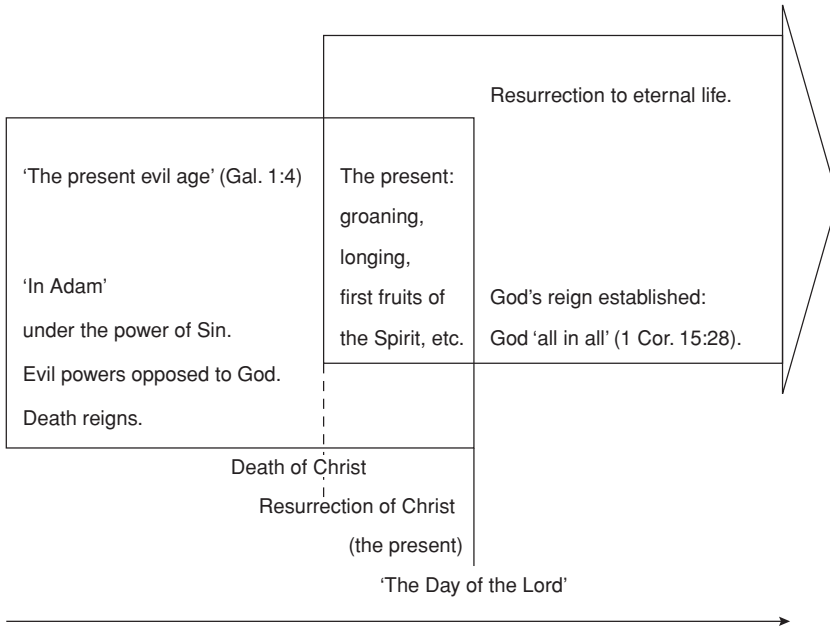


Figure 41.3 Pauline eschatology. Adapted from Davis 1995: 24 by permission of The Edwin Mellen Press. (Cf. further Davis 1995: 16–24.)

To understand this somewhat compact summary, and to appreciate some of the tensions and debates it conceals, it is necessary to examine various areas of Paul's theology in more depth. We begin with what from Paul's own writing can clearly be seen to be central: Christ (cf. Phil. 3:7–11).

Christology

While it is God who is the author of all Paul describes, and God who will ultimately be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28), the focus of Paul's devotion and proclamation is Christ, and specifically his death and resurrection. Paul clearly shares and repeats the early Christian creed: Christ died for us (*hyper hēmōn*) and was raised from the dead (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3–4). Here again the debate concerning the 'heart' of Paul's theology looms large: Did Paul understand the significance of Christ's death primarily in sacrificial or in participationist terms? Paul certainly presents the view that Christ died as a means of atonement for the transgressions of others (Rom. 3:22–5; 4:24–5; 5:6–9; 1 Cor. 15:3), a view he seems most likely to have inherited from his predecessors, and is happy to repeat. But his own thought is arguably more focused on the participatory idea of dying *with* Christ: 'the prime significance which the death of Christ has for Paul is not that it provides atonement for past transgressions (although he holds the common Christian view that it does so), but that, by *sharing* in Christ's death, one dies to the *power* of sin or to the old aeon, with the result that one *belongs to God* . . . The transfer takes place by *participation* in Christ's

death' (E. P. Sanders 1977: 467–8, citing Rom. 6:3–11; 7:4; Gal. 2:19–20; 5:24; Phil. 3:10–11, etc.). In the death of Christ God has not only dealt with past transgressions, but has provided the way in which believers in Christ can be liberated from the dominion of sin, by dying with Christ; in the resurrection of Christ God has not only vindicated Christ and exalted him as Lord, but has also made him the firstborn of a resurrected new humanity (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20). Those who live in Christ look forward confidently to their own attainment of resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:11).

The appellation 'Christ', so frequent in Paul, is itself a declaration of faith, an affirmation about who Jesus is: the Greek word *Christos* is a translation of the Hebrew *Mashiah*, Messiah, anointed one. Thus Paul's primary conviction about Jesus is that he is the expected Messiah, the anointed one of God, sent to save and restore God's people. Equally fundamental for Paul, and also frequent in his letters, is the affirmation that Jesus is Lord, this affirmation being the touchstone of Christian confession (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3). Somewhat less frequently attested, though nevertheless significant, is the description of Jesus as Son of God (Rom. 1:4; 8:3; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:19; Gal. 2:20; 4:4; 1 Thess. 1:10; etc.). Each of these 'titles' – Christ, Lord, Son of God – has roots in the Jewish scriptures, though the latter two



Figure 41.4 One of many Roman coins naming Octavian as CAESAR DIVI F[ilius]. (Octavian, who was later to become Augustus and first emperor, had been adopted as the son of Julius Caesar, deified after his death.) The drawing shows the reverse of the coin, minted about 31–29 BCE, with Victory standing on a globe holding a wreath and palm. For a plate of the coin see Sutherland (1974: pl. 213). For many other examples see Mattingley (1965: pl. 15, etc.).

also have resonances in the wider world of the Roman empire, where the emperors adopted or were given various titles, including *kyrios* (Lord) and *divi filius* (son of the divine; see Figure 41.4).²¹ None of these terms in themselves necessarily implies that Jesus is divine, nor that he is 'God the Son' in the later sense of the trinitarian confession. Indeed, there has been considerable debate as to whether Paul actually thought of Jesus as divine and pre-existent or not.

In an important but controversial book, *Christology in the Making* (1980, 1989²), James Dunn argues that Paul did not view Jesus as a pre-existent divine figure who became 'incarnate' at his birth. On the contrary, Dunn argues, Paul's Jesus was a man in whom God's 'wisdom' and power are embodied, and who, through his obedience to the call and commission of God, was raised and exalted to become Lord. A particularly crucial passage is Philippians 2:5–11, most likely a pre-existing hymn to Christ, which Paul adapts for his purposes in that letter (see Martin 1983). According to Dunn, the hymn is best read in the light of its parallels with the story of Adam in Genesis 1–3: both Adam and Jesus were made in God's image, yet while Adam reached out to become like God (Gen. 3:5, 22), Jesus willingly took the role of humble obedience, even to the point of death on the cross. Because of his obedience, he accomplished the restoration of what Adam had ruined, and was exalted by God to the position of Lord, from where he will receive the acclamation due to God himself (cf. Isa. 45:23; Dunn 1980: 114–21; 1998a: 281–8).

Without needing to deny the parallels with the Adam story here and elsewhere in Paul, it seems to me more compelling to follow those who consider that Philippians 2:5–11 does encapsulate a belief in Christ's pre-existence (e.g. Casey 1991: 112–13; Fee 1995: 203 n. 41; Bockmuehl 1997). Such pre-existence is also hinted at in 1 Corinthians 8:6 and probably 2 Corinthians 8:9 (which Dunn interprets as referring to the moment of Christ's death, rather than his becoming human; Dunn 1980: 122).²² It is notable, however, that Paul avoids stating that Jesus *was* God (note Phil. 2:6, 11). Within the framework of Jewish monotheism at the time, Paul and the early Christians could affirm Jesus' pre-existence with God from the beginning of time and his exalted position as God's supreme agent, since there were parallels in Jewish scripture and tradition, notably in the personification of wisdom as God's agent in creation (see esp. Prov. 8:22–31; Wisd. 7:22–8:1; Sir. 24:2–22).²³ Indeed, the wisdom tradition seems likely to have influenced Paul's Christological language at some points (1 Cor. 1:21–30; 8:6), and certainly influenced the follower of Paul who wrote Colossians (Col. 1:15–20). Precisely because he was a Jew and thus a monotheist, however, Paul not only avoids calling Jesus God, but also retains a clear and careful distinction between God (the Father) and Christ (the Lord), in places clearly implying the subordination of Christ to God (see esp. 1 Cor. 3:23; 11:3; 15:28; cf. also 8:6; Phil. 2:11, etc.).²⁴

One of the characteristics of Paul's Christology is what has been termed his 'corporate Christology'. In this area of his thinking, the parallels with Adam are particularly significant. Paul refers to Adam as a 'type' of Christ (Rom. 5:14); indeed, he explicitly speaks of 'the first Adam' and 'the last Adam', contrasting their identities and roles (1 Cor. 15:45–9; cf. Barrett 1962; Scroggs 1966). In Romans 5:12–21 the nature and scope of Christ's redemption are described by contrast with Adam: through the disobedience of one man (Adam), sin and death came into the world

and affected all humanity, but through the obedience of one man (Christ) came grace, righteousness and eternal life. The life of humanity under the power of sin and death can be described as life 'in Adam' (1 Cor. 15:22); similarly, the life of those who with Christ have died to this realm of sin and death (see Rom. 6:1–11) is described as life 'in Christ', a phrase Adolf Deissmann long ago emphasized as frequent and significant in Paul.²⁵ Christians live, individually (2 Cor. 5:17; 12:2) and corporately (1 Cor. 12:12–27; Gal. 3:26–8), 'in Christ'; indeed, they *are* the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). This body-image is one of Paul's most profound and memorable descriptions of 'the church' – a rather anachronistic term for the local gatherings of Christians, which Paul called *ekklēsiai*, the usual term for the gathering of citizens in a Greek city, and frequently used in the LXX of the 'assembly' of Israel (*ekklēsia* translating the Hebrew *qāhāl*).²⁶

The Spirit, ethics and the Christian community

Paul writes to his fellow followers of Christ as members of a local *ekklēsia*, a body of people who together are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), and who eagerly await the return of Christ to announce God's final triumph. The rite of initiation into this new movement was baptism, administered in the name of Christ Jesus, which symbolized believers' participation in the death of Christ, and their taking on a new identity, clothed with Christ, dead to the old, alive to the new (Rom. 6:1–11; 1 Cor. 1:13–15; Gal. 3:26–9). At the regular gatherings for worship and instruction, the Christians shared a meal together that recalled the fundamental narrative of their faith – about 'the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed' (1 Cor. 11:23) – and demonstrated their integration into one body in Christ (1 Cor. 10:16–17).²⁷ They are addressed by Paul as 'holy ones' (*hagioi*), brothers and sisters (*adelphoi*), fellow members of the body of Christ.

As such, Paul's Christian converts are clearly expected to live in a particular way, to be distinctive, set apart ('holy') from the 'evil age' in which they live. A number of times in his letters, Paul paints in stark colours the contrasts between his converts' former and present lives, between evil things and good things (Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; Gal. 5:19–23). Yet these 'lists' of vices and virtues can apparently be both a description of a change that has taken place and a warning, or exhortation, about the ways in which people must live if they are to inherit God's kingdom. Indeed, one of the puzzles in Pauline ethics is to comprehend the relationship between what is generally labelled the 'indicative' and the 'imperative'.²⁸ As we have already seen, Paul describes believers as people who have died with Christ; they have died to sin and are new creations. These are indicative statements about their new identity. Yet living in a way 'appropriate' (in Paul's view) to being a new person in Christ clearly did not simply come automatically. Indeed, Paul was sometimes scandalized at the conduct of some of his converts (1 Cor. 5:1–13). He had to urge them to act rightly, to live in a holy manner; and so, along with the indicatives, we find imperatives (cf. e.g. Rom. 6:2–10 with 6:11–14; see also 1 Cor. 10:14; 1 Thess. 4:9–12). The relation between indicative and imperative in Pauline ethics has often been summarized in the phrase 'Be what you are!' For Paul it is profoundly true to say that a believer *has* already died with Christ and is already a new person; yet in

the in-between times, the (short) time between the resurrection of Christ and his final return, there is also a sense in which this dying and rising has not yet occurred (hence another popular epitome of Pauline eschatology: 'already but not yet'). The final act in the drama, the defeat of death itself and the day of resurrection, lies in the future, and so the completion of the process of redemption, the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23), is still awaited. While dying with Christ can be spoken of as having already happened, resurrection for the believer remains for Paul a future hope (see Rom. 6:4–5; 8:22–5; E. P. Sanders 1977: 449–50, 468; Beker 1990: 73, 85; contrast Col. 2:12; 3:1). In the here and now, Christians must make a commitment; they must 'set their minds' one way and not the other, must live in the power of the Spirit and not allow sin to reign over them (Rom. 8:5–13). They must anticipate what will soon be complete. To this extent Pauline ethics is eschatologically orientated, though the imminence of Christ's return is not, in my view, as controlling a theme as some have suggested (J. T. Sanders 1975). Rather, it is their identity 'in Christ' that for Paul lies at the foundation of believers' conduct, and specifically the fact that they are brothers and sisters, co-members of the one body of Christ. On these grounds, and in fulfilment of a commandment of the Jewish scriptures (the command to love one's neighbour; see Lev. 19:18; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14), Christians are urged to be pure and holy, to love one another, to imitate Christ in looking to the interests of the other (e.g. Phil. 2:1–16).

While the theological underpinning of Pauline ethics consists primarily in believers' identity in Christ, and in the need for them to live holy lives in the power of the Spirit, the substance of Pauline ethics is derived from various sources. Already mentioned immediately above are the Jewish scriptures and the example of Christ. Also to be considered are the various parallels between Paul's ethics and various Graeco-Roman sources, especially those of the Stoics and Cynics (Malherbe 1989; Deming 1995; Downing 1998), though the extent of such influence on Paul is debated. Paul certainly cites and alludes to the Jewish scriptures in his ethical exhortations (see e.g. Rosner 1994) and is deeply shaped by his Jewish heritage – for example, in his aversion to idolatry and sexual immorality (cf. Rom. 1:18–31 and Wisd. 13–15). However, he makes very little clear reference to the teaching of Jesus. The number of echoes and allusions to that teaching is much disputed, but most scholars are agreed that there are at most only a handful of *explicit* references (1 Cor. 7:10–11; 9:14; 11:23–5; perhaps Rom. 14:14; 1 Thess. 4:15–17).²⁹ Moreover, some of these teachings may have come to Paul mediated as Christian teaching or liturgy, so he may not cite them specifically as *Jesus'* words (e.g. 1 Cor. 11:23–5; 1 Thess. 4:15–17), and in one case, he refers to Jesus' teaching, only to state that he does not follow it (1 Cor. 9:14–15; Horrell 1997a). More important, perhaps, is Paul's emphasis on Jesus as an example, with the pattern of Christ's self-giving serving as a paradigm for Christian morality (Rom. 15:2–3; Phil. 2:3–8; 1 Cor. 11:1; see Horrell 1997b: 105–9; Dunn 1994: 168–73).

The power to live a holy life in the in-between time before the return of Christ, is, for Paul, given by the Spirit (Rom. 8:1–17) – 'God's empowering presence', active in the world and in the lives of God's people (Fee 1994). Just as there is a basic contrast in Paul's thought between life 'in Adam' and life 'in Christ', so another clear dichotomy is between life *kata sarka* (according to the flesh) and life *kata pneuma*

(according to the Spirit). The former produces deeds of wickedness that lead to destruction, whereas the latter produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, and so on (Gal. 5:16–26). More fundamentally than this even, the Spirit is the essential mark of someone's being a true Christian (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:3). The Spirit affirms their adoption as God's children (Rom. 8:14–29; Gal. 3:26; 4:4–7; see Scott 1992), gives diverse gifts for the good of the whole community (1 Cor. 12:4–11), produces the fruit of holy living (Gal. 5:22–3), and groans and prays with the believer in their present time of suffering and yearning for redemption (Rom. 8:26–7). How Paul conceives of the consummation of this process of redemption we shall consider further below.

Israel and the Law

Thus far we have focused on Paul's commitment to Christ, and on how he understands the implications of what God has done in Christ for those who now live as Christians. Yet throughout it is obvious that Paul's gospel is a thoroughly Jewish message, rooted in the Jewish scriptures and in a claim about how the God of Israel has acted in fulfilment of his covenant promises to Abraham. But although the very notion of messianic hope is also entirely Jewish, Paul's insistence that these promises of God have been fulfilled in *Christ* – beside whom all his Jewish credentials are nothing but 'crap'³⁰ – distances him from his fellow (non-Christian) Jews. For them, there is simply no reason to believe that this crucified messianic leader, despatched by the Romans like so many other deluded characters, marks the pivotal and long-awaited intervention of their God. For Paul, on the other hand, convinced of Christ's resurrection and lordship through his vision, his christophany, Christ is the one in whom God has manifested his saving righteousness and through whom all the nations will come to join Israel in worshipping God, just as the prophets foresaw (Isa. 2:1–5; Micah 4:1–5). One of the most prominent areas of recent discussion in Pauline studies, then, and one with considerable implications for Christian theology and Jewish–Christian dialogue, concerns Paul's Christian view of the law, which he had as a Pharisee so zealously sought to uphold, and of God's people Israel. Only a very brief sketch of the issues and of recent discussion can be given here.

In seeking to present his gospel as the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel, as the culmination of Israel's hopes, yet at the same time insisting that salvation is to be found, for both Jew and Gentile, only in *Christ*, Paul is caught in a profound tension. He would never take the route later taken by Marcion, denying that the 'Old Testament' God had anything to do with the God who had acted in Jesus Christ. Paul is insistent that the same God was at work throughout Israel's history and in Christ, and that Israel's law and scriptures, given by God, testify faithfully to God's purposes now fulfilled in Christ. On the other hand, however, since Paul is convinced that salvation is found only in Christ, he has to maintain that Israel's law – the basis of her identity and covenant relationship with God – cannot 'save', for else Christ died in vain (cf. Gal. 2:21).

In short, Paul has to maintain that God gave the law, but that salvation is now found in Christ. He cannot therefore condemn the law, for that would be to deny its God-given nature or to impugn God, but neither can he portray it as sufficient

to create a righteous people, for then Christ came to no purpose. Hence we find in Paul both negative and positive comments about the Jewish law (positive statements include Rom. 7:12, 22; 13:8–10; Gal. 5:14; negative ones are 1 Cor. 15:56; 2 Cor. 3:6–11; Gal. 3:10–13; etc.).

The problem over which scholars continue to wrestle, with little apparent agreement, is how to make coherent sense of Paul's view of the law, if indeed coherent sense can be made of his varied and contrasting statements (for overviews of recent discussion see Thielman 1994; Roetzel 1995; Kruse 1997). Discussion of this issue has been decisively influenced by the publication of a book often credited with opening up a whole new perspective on Paul (see Dunn 1983), E. P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977). Sanders showed how New Testament scholars, often influenced by a Lutheran understanding of Paul's gospel, had presented a negative caricature of Judaism, portraying it as a religion of 'legalistic works-righteousness', a religion in which people sought to earn their salvation by notching up a sufficient quantity of 'good works'. Through an exhaustive study of relevant Jewish texts, Sanders sought to demonstrate that this portrayal of Judaism was completely inaccurate. He proposed instead that Judaism's 'pattern of religion' could be epitomized in the term 'covenantal nomism': the basic foundation of Judaism was the covenant, made through the gracious and generous initiative of God, and the appropriate response on the part of those who were members of the covenant people was to live in obedience to the way of life, the *Torah* or law (Greek: *nomos*) given by God. Obedience to this law did not earn one's place in the covenant people; it served to sustain and confirm it (E. P. Sanders 1977: 419–28).

Sanders' book has given rise to considerable discussion, and books and articles on Paul and the law abound. But whether they agree or disagree partly or profoundly with Sanders, scholars have certainly been forced to consider Judaism at the time of Paul on its own terms, and not rest content with Christian caricatures. In the light of Sanders' work, however, the question remains as to how then to understand Paul's criticisms of the law. Was Paul not attacking 'legalism', and if he was not, what was he criticizing and why?

Sanders' own answer is essentially that Paul is reasoning from a new perspective: since he is now convinced that God has acted in Christ to save all, both Jew and Gentile, Paul reasons backwards to the conclusion that all must have needed saving. Paul as a pre-Christian Jew did not feel himself to be labouring under a heavy conscience, under the weight of impossible legal commands; on the contrary, he evidences a robust view of his (previous) status under the law (Phil. 3:6; Stendahl 1976: 78–96). But having become convinced that Christ is indeed God's chosen way to save all people, Paul's perspective on his Jewish past radically alters. 'In short', Sanders argues, '*this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity*' (1977: 552, his emphasis). The apparent inconsistency in Paul's statements about the law can be resolved, Sanders suggests, by observing that Paul gives different answers to different questions (E. P. Sanders 1983). To the question 'How does someone enter the people of God' Paul's answer is emphatically, 'Not by works of law but by faith in Christ' (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16). But on the question of what behaviour is appropriate for those who are 'in' God's people, and wish to remain 'in', the answer is that the law's demands must be fulfilled, not in all its particular requirements

(specifically circumcision, food laws and sabbath observance), but in its basic demand of love for one's neighbour (Rom. 8:4; 13:8–10; Gal. 5:14; E. P. Sanders 1983: 93–135).

Inevitably, some scholars have not found Sanders' reconstructed Paul convincing, and other attempts to make sense of Paul's view of the law abound. Heikki Räisänen, for example, argues that Paul's statements on the law are more contradictory and inconsistent than Sanders allows and that they simply cannot be reconciled or brought into a coherent schema (Räisänen 1983). Going further than those who have suggested that Paul's views change between different letters, especially between Galatians and Romans (Hübner 1984; cf. Drane 1975), Räisänen maintains that even within one and the same letter, Paul's statements about the Jewish law do not reveal a consistent perspective.

At the other end of the spectrum are scholars who insist that Paul is rather more consistent than scholars like Räisänen allow, but who nevertheless are unsatisfied with Sanders' Paul. Some, while taking Sanders seriously, have argued with renewed conviction the case for a largely 'traditional' understanding of Paul's criticism of the law and his doctrine of justification by faith (e.g. Westerholm 1988; 1991: 57–74; 1997). Others have sought to develop a 'new perspective' on Paul, indebted to, yet differing from, Sanders. James Dunn, for example, regards Sanders' picture of Paul as unsatisfactory, presenting a Paul who simply and arbitrarily jumps from one system of religion to another, without there being any real reason or sense in his critique of Judaism (Dunn 1990: 186–7). Dunn accepts Sanders' presentation of the Judaism contemporary with Paul, and thus agrees that Paul cannot have been attacking legalism *per se*, nor the idea that doing good works could lead to salvation, since Jews did not believe this anyway. Rather, Dunn argues, Paul attacks the way in which the Jews of his time regarded the works of the law as a boundary marker demarcating who is and who is not 'in' the people of God; he attacks their narrow, racially, ethnically, and geographically defined notion of God's people and, in its place, sets out a more 'open', inclusive, form of Judaism (based on faith in Christ). Thus, 'Paul's criticism of Judaism was, more accurately described, a criticism of the xenophobic strand of Judaism, to which Paul himself had previously belonged . . . Paul was in effect converting from a closed Judaism to an open Judaism' (Dunn 1998b: 261; cf. 271; 1998a: 137–50, 349–66, 514–19).

However, despite his clear advocacy of a 'new perspective' on Paul, Dunn's Paul is perhaps not as different from the Lutheran Paul as Dunn himself suggests (Campbell 1998: 99–101; Matlock 1998: 86). Instead of criticizing his fellow Jews for their legalism, Paul now criticizes them for their xenophobia, or ethnocentric separatism, but the basic structure remains the same: there really was a 'problem' with Judaism and Christ really was the answer! That formulation should highlight how theologically loaded Dunn's perspective is; nothing wrong with that, of course, as long as we make clear that this is Paul's *Christian* perspective on Judaism.³¹ Moreover, what Dunn sees as an 'open' form of Judaism is of course a Judaism (if the term can still be appropriately claimed) based on belief in Christ, with its own forms of particularism and exclusivism (see Barclay 1997). While Dunn is right that *Paul* did not see himself as in any way betraying his Jewish heritage, his evangelistic message to the Gentiles was entirely based on the conviction that it is in the

crucified and risen Christ that God has fulfilled his promises to Israel. His argument only makes sense from that perspective – here I think Sanders is right – and while Paul is utterly convinced of its truth it is equally understandable that most of his Jewish contemporaries were not.

Paul reasons from a ‘Christian’ perspective. From that viewpoint, a decisive moment has occurred in the death and resurrection of Christ, and a new era has begun. Whereas people previously lived under law, as human beings ‘in Adam’, enslaved to the power of sin, now they can live in Christ, dead to the old era, alive in the Spirit, by whose power they ‘walk in newness of life’ (Rom. 6:4). The law belongs to the old era, so even though its righteous requirements will be fulfilled by those who live in Christ (Rom. 8:4; 13:8–10; Gal. 5:14), Christians, whether they be Jew or Gentile, no longer live ‘under law’ (*hypo nomon*) but live ‘in Christ’, in the power of the Spirit (Rom. 6:14–15; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 2:14–21). To a considerable extent Paul’s dispute with his fellow Jews, and specifically with his Jewish-Christian opponents, concerns a fundamental question of boundaries and *identity*: from a Jewish perspective it is living in obedience to Torah that defines the identity of the people of God called Israel; Paul argues that the people of God – the ‘true’ Israel, as he sees it – find their identity in Christ alone.

Even that summary, contentious though it doubtless is, raises a further question: Why then did God give the law, if it was inadequate for the task of creating a righteous people? Paul recognizes the force of this question, and attempts a number of answers to it, even though, again, scholars disagree as to how exactly to interpret those answers. Clearly Paul regards the law as given for a time, a time now ended, since Christ has come (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 4:4–5) and God’s children have come of age (Gal. 4:1–7). In Galatians 3:19–25, Paul gives the law a temporary and subsidiary role in the purposes of God (cf. Ziesler 1992: 44–9): it was given ‘because of transgressions’³² (that is, probably, to provide a means of reckoning, limiting, and dealing with sin) and came ‘through angels by a mediator’ (Gal. 3:19), a description that relativizes the status of the law *vis-à-vis* the promise made to Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:15–18). The law acted as a tutor, or guardian (*paidagōgos*; Gal. 3:24), until Christ came, in whom people are redeemed from ‘the curse of the law’ (Gal. 3:13). In Romans 7, where Paul is a good deal less angry and confrontational than in Galatians, he is more concerned to defend the law’s status. The bondage of humankind under sin is not the law’s fault. On the contrary, the law itself is ‘holy, just and good’ (Rom. 7:12); the fault lies with sin (portrayed as an almost personified ‘power’). In two similar yet different attempts to elucidate this situation, Paul first portrays sin as stealing in to take advantage of the opportunity the law offered (Rom. 7:7–12) and secondly describes a divided self in which the inner self delights in the law of God and wishes to do right, while the outer self is subject to the law of sin (7:13–25; see further E. P. Sanders 1983: 65–91). The deliverance from this anguished situation comes through the Spirit-empowered new life in Christ (Rom. 7:24 – 8:4). The law, then, was given to show what was right and to keep track of sin, but was powerless to liberate humanity from the power of sin, under which all in Adam are enslaved.

A further pressing question underlies all this: What has become of Israel’s special status as God’s people? Crucial questions concerning God’s faithfulness and reliability

are at stake here (cf. Meeks 1991): Does God make promises but then break them, or try plan A but abandon it for a new plan if it fails? Here again Paul was aware of the questions, but once more was caught in an awkward tension by the very nature of the gospel he proclaimed. Especially in Romans, Paul tries to hold together on the one hand the assertion that both Jew and Gentile are equally in need of salvation and are dealt with on the same basis by an impartial God (Rom. 1:16; 2:9–11; 3:20, 29–30; 10:12–13), and on the other hand the insistence that Israel does indeed have a special status and that God's gift and call to her are irrevocable (3:1; 9:4–5; 11:29).³³ This awkward tension is clearly visible, for example, in Romans 3:1–9. To the rhetorical question 'What advantage, then, has the Jew?' Paul replies, 'much in every way' (3:1–2). Yet only a few verses later Paul refutes any claim to special confidence or defence on the part of the Jews, since 'all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin' (3:9b).³⁴

However, it is in Romans 9–11 that Paul turns to face these issues head on. These chapters are among the most dense and difficult in the Pauline corpus, as Paul wrestles to make sense of God's purposes and their implications for the people of Israel. Paul's anguish over the matter is clear (9:1–3) and his need to explain Israel's lack of faith (in Christ) pressing. Various reasons are given in this profound yet complex argument, as it progresses (and progress it does) through the three chapters. 'Not all Israelites are true Israelites', is one argument (9:6–13); 'God is sovereign and can do as he likes', is another (9:14–29).³⁵ 'Only a remnant of Israel is faithful, as at other times in her history', is a further explanation (11:1–6). Finally, Paul sees a divine purpose in the faithlessness of Israel, and in the faith found among the Gentiles: just as Israel's rejection meant the offer of salvation to the Gentiles, so in turn the salvation of the Gentiles will make Israel jealous and in the end 'all Israel will be saved' (11:7–27; cf. 9:30 – 10:21; Bell 1994). This is indeed, Paul exclaims, as well he might, a 'mystery' (11:25–6), and he does not answer the questions that immediately crop up in our minds: What does he mean by *all* Israel? Does he mean every individual Israelite who has ever lived, or only the 'true' Israelites he referred to earlier? And will Israel be saved when she finally comes to have faith in Christ, or simply as Israel – since God's gifts and call are irrevocable?³⁶ Yet even the mystery of Israel's final salvation is only a part, albeit a central one, in the wider mystery with which [chapter 11](#) ends. That is the mystery of God's plan to have mercy on all people, Jews and Gentiles (11:30–2), a marvellous yet mysterious plan to which Paul can only respond with words of wonder and praise (11:33–6). Here too Paul hardly answers all the questions about which we would like to have heard his views: Does he mean *all* people? And if he does, how does he hold together the need for people to turn in faith from wickedness to Christ with his conviction that God's sovereign plan of salvation will ultimately be unstoppable? Without formulating it in so many words, Paul is of course caught on the horns of a well-known theological dilemma: how to hold together both human responsibility and the sovereignty of God. And without denying either side of the tension, it is important to do justice to the theme of God's universal mercy in Paul, to Paul's vision of the redemption not only of all humanity but also of the whole creation (Rom. 8:21), not least because these have all too often been ignored. That leads us on to consideration of one final theme: Paul's hopes for the future, his vision of the eschaton.

The goal of salvation: Paul's view of the eschaton

In his earliest letter, 1 Thessalonians, Paul describes the Thessalonian Christians as having 'turned to God from idols . . . to wait for his Son from heaven' (1 Thess. 1:9–10). Later in the same letter he deals with the apparent worries caused to some of the Thessalonians by the fact that some of their number had died before this expected return of God's Son (4:13 – 5:11). The message they had heard from Paul had clearly led them to expect an imminent return of Christ, and an imminent end to the process of their salvation. Paul's response to their worries indicates that he still envisages Christ's return as very near (4:15), and as an apocalyptic event when those in Christ, both dead and living, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be with him for ever. The precise time is unknown, but the day will come suddenly, 'like a thief in the night' (1 Thess. 5:2; cf. Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39).

By the time of 1 Corinthians it may be that more of the first generation of Christians have died (1 Cor. 15:51; cf. Lüdemann 1984: 239–41) and because of the specific problem Paul is dealing with at Corinth he focuses primarily on the future resurrection of all believers. But the general picture is similar to that in 1 Thessalonians: the final day of victory and resurrection will soon come, following in order from the event of Christ's resurrection, for he is 'the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep' (15:20). On this final day, announced by the sound of the trumpet (15:51; 1 Thess. 4:16), not only will the dead in Christ rise and be clothed with immortality, but death and sin will finally be destroyed; God will complete the task of subjecting all such powers to Christ, and so Christ will be subjected to God, who will be 'all in all' – almost a panentheistic vision of the final consummation of the saving work of God in Christ (see 15:20–8, 35–50; Héring 1962: 169).

Perhaps through the experiences of near-death suffering and imprisonment (Dodd 1934; Harvey 1996), Paul comes in later letters to reflect more on the possibility of his own death, and on the confidence with which he faces death. In 2 Corinthians 5:1–5, for example, he describes the transition from earthly life to heavenly life in terms of an unclothing and reclothing: he will one day leave his earthly tent (a metaphor for the body) and put on a heavenly dwelling (cf. also Phil. 1:20–4, written from prison). Whether or not Paul is anxious about the time of disembodiment he might face between death and the final resurrection is not altogether clear,³⁷ but it is clear that his reflections on death are framed by his belief in the final day of judgment (5:10) and his hope for resurrection (4:14; Phil. 3:11). In Romans 8:18–39 the contrast between the sufferings of the present and the far greater glory to come is powerfully portrayed. Paul is confident that no suffering or hardship – absolutely nothing (see 8:35–9) – can separate Christians from the love of God in Christ, while they await the completion of the process of redemption already begun and anticipated on earth (8:23). Unique to Romans 8 in Paul's writings is the vision of the whole creation yearning for the completion of God's saving work, yearning for the liberation that will come when God's children are revealed (8:20–3).

Although the most extensive discussions of the final day of victory and resurrection are found in Paul's earlier letters, whereas reflections on the prospect of death occur in later letters, the evidence does not really support the idea of a change in Paul's mind, as has sometimes been suggested (Dodd 1934). Changes in emphasis

there may be, caused by Paul's own experiences of suffering and imprisonment and by the delay of the Lord's return, but the expectant hope for the final day of salvation is a constant feature throughout (Rom. 13:11–13; Phil. 3:11, 20–1; 4:5). Paul's theology is eschatologically orientated: he is constantly looking forward amid the sufferings and pressures of the present to the completion of the process of redemption, the salvation of Israel and of all humanity (Rom. 11:25–32), the liberation of creation, and the resurrection and immortality of God's children. These are the future visions towards which Paul's life and work as apostle of Jesus Christ are orientated; these are the goals that drove him on with resolute determination: 'One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus' (Phil. 3:13–14 NRSV)

PAUL'S LEGACY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND BEYOND

Because of the debate about Paul's authorship of some of the letters attributed to him, it is difficult to say where Paul ends and the interpretation of Paul begins. If we accept only the seven letters listed above as authentically from Paul, then the appropriation and reinterpretation of Paul's theology begins in 2 Thessalonians, Colossians and Ephesians (see Beker 1992). In these letters we find characteristic Pauline themes and phrases, yet also significant theological developments, such as the more realized eschatology of Colossians (2:12; 3:1), together with its more exalted Christology (1:15–20; 2:9–10) and more conservative social teaching (3:18–4:1). The Pastoral Epistles stand at an even clearer distance from Paul, with new themes and phraseology reflecting the demands of a different time and context. With the apostle long since dead, and the perceived threat of heretics and false teachers pressing, a prime concern is to preserve and guard what is seen as sound teaching (1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; etc.), the 'deposit' of the apostolic generation (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14). This deposit, however, appears only in concise credal formulae (e.g. 1 Tim. 3:16) and the theological themes characteristic of Paul are hardly developed at all; instead we find an emphasis on the need for behaviour that is decent and respectable (e.g. 1 Tim. 3:1–13; 6:1–2; Titus 2:1–10; cf. Verner 1983: 147–60).

It is certainly clear, even within the New Testament itself, that Paul's legacy rapidly became subject to varied and disputed interpretations. The complexity of his letters, and their extended arguments, may well have contributed to the diversity of appropriations of Paul (2 Pet. 3:15–16) and to the tendency to focus on Paul as a heroic apostolic figure rather than on the substance of his teaching (see further Lindemann 1979; Babcock 1990). Paul was as popular – perhaps more popular – with versions of Christianity that were eventually deemed to be 'heretical' as in what we might call 'orthodox' circles, as can be seen from some of the apocryphal literature (e.g. the Acts of Paul) and from the use of Paul's writings by the Gnostics (see Pagels 1975), not to mention his centrality for Marcion. Indeed it can be claimed with some justification that Paul's theology was more frequently ignored or misinterpreted than understood in the subsequent history of the Church.

Paul's writings have, however, played an enormously important role in the thinking of some of the great and most influential figures in Church history. The names of Augustine and Luther are most frequently mentioned. Whether they rediscovered or distorted the apostle's teaching – or perhaps, inevitably, to some degree both – may be open to dispute, but the power and influence of their interpretations cannot be denied. Paul was not 'the founder of Christianity', nor hardly even 'the second founder of Christianity', but his thought and letters were of enormous significance in the construction of Christian, as distinct from Jewish, identity. Paul's letters continue both to inspire and to irritate, to challenge and to confuse, not only within the Christian Church. He remains a mountain on the landscape of Christian history and an enormous influence on all subsequent Christian theology.³⁸

NOTES

- 1 For this image, see the marvellous poem entitled 'Paul' by R. S. Thomas (172–3 in *Later Poems*, London: Macmillan, 1983).
- 2 Quoted by Beker 1990: 62.
- 3 A view represented by Maccoby 1991. Wilson 1997 also makes much of the influence of non-Jewish religions on Paul; note the critique in Wright 1997: 167–78.
- 4 The precise sense of the Greek *historēsai Kēphan* (Gal. 1:18) has been much discussed; see e.g. Dunn 1990: 110–13, 126–8.
- 5 For a brief overview of this period from the perspective of the 'Jewish Christianity' represented by James, Peter, etc., see Horrell 2000: 138–41.
- 6 See esp. Hengel 1983: 1–29, 53–8; also Wedderburn 1989a; Räisänen 1992: 149–202.
- 7 For criticisms of Hill, see Esler 1995.
- 8 Hengel and Schwemer (1997: xi) date the beginning of the mission of the 'Hellenists' in Antioch to c. 36/37. They stress the importance of the Hellenists to the early Christian mission, but also emphasize both that this Gentile mission is not strictly *pre*-Pauline (see 31–4, 208, 281, etc.), since Paul was converted in c. 33 CE, and that Paul was crucial in establishing and justifying theologically the Gentile mission (309).
- 9 See e.g. Justin's comments on those within the Church who practise the Jewish way of life (*Dial.* 46–7). On Jewish Christianity and its eventual exclusion from 'orthodox Christianity', see Horrell 2000.
- 10 I take it that these two accounts describe the same occasion, though that is not universally agreed.
- 11 There has been extensive discussion of the 'incident at Antioch' and the issues surrounding it; see e.g. Dunn 1990: 129–82; Esler 1987: 71–109; 1998: 93–116; E. P. Sanders 1990.
- 12 See discussion in Murphy-O'Connor 1996: 65–70; Hengel 1991: 63–86; Elliott 1994: 143–80.
- 13 See Segal 1990, e.g. 6: 'Paul was both converted and called.' For an overview of the considerable discussion on this subject, see Hurtado 1993.
- 14 Working out the chronology of Paul's life is difficult, not least because of the paucity of relevant data and the problems involved in correlating the more detailed information in Acts with the primary data in the epistles. On all of what follows in this paragraph, see Murphy-O'Connor 1996: 1–31; Jewett 1979; Lüdemann 1984; Riesner 1998.
- 15 On this period, see Murphy-O'Connor 1996: 71–101, and esp. the massive studies of Hengel and Schwemer 1997; Riesner 1998.
- 16 It is debated whether Paul's 'law-free' gospel for the Gentiles goes back to his conversion (so e.g. Kim 1982: 56–66, 269–311), or whether he initially required full obedience to Jewish law (cf. Gal. 5:11), or whether indeed he initially preached to Jews rather than Gentiles (so e.g. Watson 1986: 28–31).
- 17 For the details of this itinerary see Murphy-O'Connor 1996: 24–31; Jewett 1979: 162–5. On Paul's collection see Horrell 1995 and other literature mentioned there.

- 18 Cf. Koester 1982: 144–5. For a discussion of this last period of Paul's life see Murphy-O'Connor 1996: 341–71, who draws evidence from the Pastoral Epistles (especially 2 Timothy, which he regards as authentic) for a rather overimaginative reconstruction of this phase of Paul's activity, including the idea of a visit to Spain.
- 19 Mention should be made of the massive recent study of Paul's theology by Dunn (1998a).
- 20 See Wedderburn 1988; Donfried 1991. It is now widely accepted that Romans is not a systematic compendium of Paul's theology, but is shaped by the circumstances both of Paul himself and of the Roman churches.
- 21 See further Wright 1997: 56–7, 88; Horsley 1997. On the use of the title *kyrios* in the eastern empire see Deissmann 1910: 353–64, and on the deification of Roman emperors, Kreitzer 1996: 69–98.
- 22 Other passages subject to such debate include Rom. 1:3–4; 8:3; Gal. 4:4.
- 23 See further discussion in Dunn 1980: 163–212; Hurtado 1988. Hurtado explores the Jewish evidence for 'divine agency speculation' – that is, concerning 'heavenly figures who are described as participating in some way in God's rule of the world and his redemption of the elect . . . as occupying a position second only to God and acting on God's behalf in some major capacity' (1988: 17). Hurtado distinguishes three types of such speculation: divine attributes and powers (such as wisdom); exalted patriarchs (such as Moses and Enoch); and principal angels.
- 24 A different view is taken by Wright 1991: 120–36; 1997: 65–75, who argues that Paul has redefined Jewish monotheism, weaving Christ (and the Spirit) into the very being of God, in a trinitarian manner.
- 25 Deissmann 1926: 140. According to Deissmann, the phrase 'in Christ' (or 'in the Lord') occurs 164 times in Paul's epistles.
- 26 See e.g. Deut. 23:2–9; 1 Kgs 18:14, 22, 55. However, *synagōgē* appears somewhat more frequently in the LXX than *ekklēsia*.
- 27 On these ritual dimensions of life in the Pauline churches, see Meeks 1983: 140–63; Horrell 1996: 80–8.
- 28 See Furnish 1968; and the essays by Bultmann and Parsons in Rosner 1995: 195–247.
- 29 See Horrell 1997a: 588–90; Wenham 1995: 3–4. Wenham provides the most detailed recent discussion of this whole area of debate. See also Wedderburn 1989b.
- 30 This is the translation of *skybala* (Phil. 3:8) suggested by Hays 1989: 122. Whether this is the best rendering has been disputed (see Fee 1995: 319) but the word is certainly a vulgarity referring to filth, dirt, excrement, etc.
- 31 Matlock is therefore right, in my view, to insist that 'Paul's Christian theology of the law has an irreducibly solution-to-plight character that Dunn would avoid' (1998: 78).
- 32 The meaning of the phrase is much discussed in the commentaries; see e.g. Dunn 1993: 188–90.
- 33 The argument of Stowers (1994) that Paul is addressing Gentiles only in Romans has been refuted by Hays 1996.
- 34 The translation of Rom. 3:9a, it should be noted, is notoriously difficult and open to various possibilities; see Dunn 1988: 146–8.
- 35 Famously regarded by Dodd (1959: 171) as 'the weakest point in the whole epistle': 'man is not a pot; he *will* ask, "Why did you make me like this?" [9:20] and he will not be bludgeoned into silence'.
- 36 See further discussion in Longenecker 1989; Hvalvik 1990; Donaldson 1993.
- 37 The nuances and ambiguities here are discussed in the commentaries; see e.g. Thrall 1994: 356–85; Barnett 1997: 255–67.
- 38 I am very grateful to David Catchpole for his comments on a draft of this chapter, and to Fern Clarke for help in compiling the bibliography. However, I alone am responsible for the opinions, and any errors there may be.

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PART VII

RELIGIOUS IDEAS

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CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

SALVATION IN JEWISH THOUGHT



Dan Cohn-Sherbok

In the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, the salvation of the Jewish nation is understood in terms of Messianic deliverance. While the Jewish people were promised a future reward for the observance of the commandments, the Messianic Age holds the promise of ultimate salvation and redemption.

THE BIBLICAL MESSIAH

In the book of Samuel the notion of the salvation of the Jewish nation through a divinely appointed agent is explicitly expressed. Here Scripture asserts that the Lord has chosen David and his descendants to reign over Israel to the end of time. Thus 2 Samuel 23 proclaims:

Now these are the last words of David:
The oracle of David, the son of Jesse,
... the anointed of the God of Jacob ...
The God of Israel has spoken,
the Rock of Israel has said to me:
When one rules justly over men,
ruling in the fear of God ...
Yea, does not my house stand so with God?
For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure. (2 Samuel 23:1, 3, 5)

In this passage David is depicted as the anointed in the sense that he is consecrated for a divine purpose.

Of similar significance are the verses in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles where Nathan the prophet assures the king that his throne will be established for all time and that his throne will be secure forever. Speaking to David about the construction of the Temple, he declares:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel; and I have been

with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place. (2 Samuel 7:8–10)

This early biblical doctrine assumes that David's position will endure through his lifetime and be inherited by a series of successors who will carry out God's providential plan of deliverance. With the fall of the Davidic empire after the death of King Solomon, there arose the view that the house of David would eventually rule over the two divided kingdoms as well as neighbouring peoples. Yet, despite such a hopeful vision of Israel's future, the pre-exilic prophets were convinced that the nation would be punished for its iniquity. Warning the people of impending disaster, Amos speaks of the Day of the Lord when God will unleash his fury against those who have rebelled against him. This will not be a time of deliverance, but of destruction: 'Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!' he declared. 'Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light' (Amos 5:18). Here the prophet portrays such a day in the most negative terms:

Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord:
'In all the squares there shall be wailing;
and in all the streets they shall say, "Alas! alas!"
They shall call the farmers to mourning
and to wailing those who are skilled in lamentation,
and in all vineyards there shall be wailing;
for I will pass through the midst of you.' (Amos 5:16–17)

For Amos the Day of the Lord will be bitter – feasts will be turned into mourning and songs to lamentation (Amos 8:10). Those who are secure in Samaria will go into captivity, and Israel will be driven into exile (Amos 6:7; 7:17).

For Amos then, the Day of the Lord is the necessary result of sin; this fearful prediction serves as the backdrop to deliverance. Before Israel can be saved, the nation is to suffer exile, destruction and slaughter. Only after such terrible events will the house of David be restored to its former glory and the kings of the house of David rule over the ten tribes. At the time of salvation there will be an ingathering of the exiles and Israel will rule over all foreign powers.

Like Amos, Hosea believes that God will punish his people for their sinfulness. Such suffering, however, is to serve as the means to moral reform. Israel is to endure the pangs of childbirth before salvation can come (Hosea 13:13). Such chastisement is to bring about repentance and dedication to the covenant. Then the Lord will have mercy on his chosen people and exalt them among the nations.

There is thus a direct link between destruction and salvation. According to Hosea, although the people shall be deprived of their king this situation will change once the Israelites mend their ways and return to the Lord:

For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince,
without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the

children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days. (Hosea 3:4-5)

Echoing Amos, Hosea predicts that the Day of the Lord will be great and abundant. It will result in earthly prosperity and bliss:

I will be as the dew to Israel;
he shall blossom as the lily,
he shall strike root as the poplar;
his shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the olive,
and his fragrance like Lebanon.
They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow,
they shall flourish as a garden. (Hosea 14:5-7)

The captives and the exiles shall return to their own land, and in another passage Hosea prophesies that the order of nature will be fundamentally altered: 'And I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety' (Hosea 2:18). Here in embryonic form is the concept of perfect salvation in the end of days. Drawing faith from the closing chapters in the history of northern Israel, both Amos and Hosea predict a future age in which the glories of the Lord will be manifest in the land.

FROM ISAIAH TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JUDAH

The book of Isaiah begins by explaining that what follows is an account of the prophecies of Isaiah concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In the first prophetic oracle the prophet presents God as disappointed with his people because of their iniquity. Nonetheless, he predicts the eventual salvation of the nation:

It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
and many peoples shall come and say:
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.'
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:2–4)

This future vision of the salvation of the Jewish people, however, is overshadowed by calamity. In [chapter 2](#) Isaiah levels criticism against idolatry, foretelling that such rebellion against God will bring about the destruction of the Temple. After discussing the place of Assyria in God's providential plan of devastation, Isaiah returns to the promise of salvation. A child will be born, he states, who will be the Prince of Peace, yet this promise is placed into the context of God's dissatisfaction with his people. According to the prophet, God will use Assyria as an instrument of punishment. Only a faithful remnant will remain, from which a redeemer will issue forth to bring about a new epoch in the nation's history:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him . . .
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth . . .
The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
and the calf and the lion and the fatling together.
(Isaiah 11:1–2, 3–4, 6)

In another passage, the prophet presents a song of praise that is to be sung on the day of Israel's salvation:

In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:
'We have a strong city;
he sets up salvation
as walls and bulwarks.
Open the gates,
that the righteous nation which keeps faith
may enter in.
Thou dost keep him in perfect peace,
whose mind is stayed on thee . . .
Trust in the Lord for ever,
for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.' (Isaiah 26:1–4)

A contemporary of Isaiah, the prophet Micah prophesied in the southern Kingdom from 750 to 686 BCE. Condemning both Samaria and Judah for their wickedness,

he declares that God will bring about judgement of the people: Samaria will be reunited and the places of idolatry destroyed. Yet despite this dire prediction, the prophet wishes to reassure the nation that it will not be utterly cut off. God, he states, has a purpose for its people in the future:

I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob,
I will gather the remnant of Israel;
I will set them together
 like sheep in a fold,
like a flock in its pasture,
a noisy multitude of men. (Micah 2:12)

Confident in the restoration of the people, he looks forward to an age of prosperity and fulfilment. Like Isaiah he predicts a time of salvation for the Jewish nation. All nations, he declares, will go to the mountain of the Lord and dwell together in peace; in those days swords will be turned into ploughshares and each man will sit under his vine and fig tree:

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall decide for strong nations afar off;
and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;
but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree,
and none shall make them afraid. (Micah 4:2–4)

The prophet Zephaniah was active in Judah during the reign of Josiah in about 625 BCE. Like the prophetic figures who preceded him, he warns against the nation's unfaithfulness: in his view, impending destruction would be the result of sinfulness. The great Day of the Lord is at hand, the prophet announces – it will be a time not of fulfilment but of calamity:

a day of distress and anguish
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
 against fortified cities
and against lofty battlements. (Zephaniah 1:15–16)

Nothing will be able to prevent this outpouring of God's wrath; nonetheless, such devastation will not totally overwhelm the people. In the final part of his book, Zephaniah calls on the Israelites to wait for God's salvation: he will gather the

nations and pour out the heat of his anger. But at that time he will change the speech of all nations so that they will call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord. Knowing that their chastening is over, the people can exult. Certain of God's lovingkindness, the nation can look forward to restoration and renewal: 'Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion', he declares. 'Shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem' (Zephaniah 3:14). Confident of the future, the prophet declares in God's name:

'Behold at the time I will deal
with all your oppressors.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you together;
yea, I will make you renowned and praised
among the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes,' says the Lord. (Zephaniah 3:19–20)

In 626 BCE Jeremiah was commissioned as a prophet during the reign of Josiah – his ministry continued until the destruction of Judah. Jeremiah's earliest prophecies date from the time of Josiah: Judah, he states, has forsaken God and in consequence will be punished. What is now required is repentance: if the inhabitants refuse, God will send forth an invader to subdue the country:

Flee for safety, O people of Benjamin,
from the midst of Jerusalem!
Blow the trumpet in Tekoa
and raise a signal on Beth-haccherem;
for evil looms out of the north. (Jeremiah 6:1)

Although persuaded that the country is doomed, Jeremiah is certain that the Lord will not completely destroy his people: a remnant will return with a new king at its head:

Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. (Jeremiah 23:5–6)

In his view, this new redemption resulting in the salvation of Israel will bring a new spiritual life for the nation. The Lord will create a new heart for his people and pour out a new spirit upon them:

Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jeremiah 31:31-3)

For Jeremiah, in this blissful time a noble king filled with fear of the Lord will rule over the people:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.' (Jeremiah 33:14-16)

POST-EXILIC PROPHECY

Dwelling in Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel begins his ministry seven years before the conquest of Jerusalem. Like the earlier prophets, he castigates the Jewish people for their iniquity – because they have turned away from God further punishment will be inflicted upon them. Yet, despite the departure of God's glory from the Temple, Ezekiel reassures the nation that it will not be abandoned: 'Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel' (Ezekiel 11:17)

In this spirit the prophet offers words of comfort and hope after the fall of Judah. In his view, God takes no pleasure in the death of sinners; what he requires instead is a contrite heart. Using the image of a shepherd and his flock, Ezekiel reassuringly declares that God will gather his people from exile and return them to the Promised Land:

For thus says the Lord God: Behold I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. (Ezekiel 34:11-12)

This prophecy is followed by a further vision of restoration – the Lord promises that cities will be reinhabited and their ruins rebuilt. Such national restoration, the prophet continues, will be accompanied by personal dedication to the law. This reassurance is reinforced by Ezekiel's vision of dry bones: although the nation has been devastated, it will be renewed in a further deliverance:

As I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And as I looked, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them . . . Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.” Therefore prophesy, and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel . . . And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land.”’ (Ezekiel 37:7–8, 11, 14)

This vision is followed by a description of a future king who will rule over his people. Under his dominion Jerusalem will benefit from the promises of the covenant:

My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. They shall dwell in the land where your fathers dwelt that I gave to my servant Jacob; they and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there for ever; and David my servant shall be their prince for ever. (Ezekiel 37:24–5)

Like Ezekiel, Second Isaiah is anxious to offer words of consolation to those who have experienced the destruction of Judah. In place of oracles of denunciation, the prophet offers the promise of restoration. According to Second Isaiah, the Lord will return in triumph to Jerusalem as a shepherd leading his flock: ‘He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young’ (Isaiah 40:11). All the world will witness this act of salvation and declare that the God of Israel is Lord.

In [chapter 49](#) the prophet depicts the servant of the Lord through whom salvation will be brought to the ends of the earth – he will be mocked and despised. This theme is further developed in [chapter 53](#):

He was despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
 he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he has borne our griefs
 and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that made us whole
 and with his stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:3–5)

Second Isaiah concludes with a vision of the future glory of Zion: God will be reunited with his people, and all will be fulfilled.

Echoing the predictions about the restoration of Zion in Second Isaiah, Third Isaiah emphasizes the role of the Jewish people in God's providential plan. Through Israel's salvation all nations will be blessed, and the Temple become a focus of worship for all peoples. Chapter 60 continues with a description of the glory of Zion. Jerusalem will be honoured throughout the world because of God's greatness. This theme is developed in the next chapter, which speaks of a figure on whom the Spirit of God will rest; he will liberate all captives, bring tidings to the afflicted, and rebuild Zion:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good tidings to the afflicted;
he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound . . .
They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations,
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations. (Isaiah 6:1, 4)

At this time Jerusalem will be acknowledged as the place where the Lord's redeemed dwell. Although God will judge those who have been unfaithful, the promise of salvation is offered to all who are loyal to him. Here Third Isaiah speaks of a new heaven and a new earth that will be created at the end of days:

'For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth;
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind.
But be glad and rejoice for ever
in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing,
and her people a joy . . .
The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
and dust shall be the serpent's food.
They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain. (Isaiah 65:17-18, 25)

The prophet Haggai together with Zerubbabel engaged in the rebuilding of the Temple. In a series of discourses Haggai describes the glories of the rebuilt Temple. God, he declares, is with his people. No longer is he determined that they will be punished because of their iniquities as he was when he used the Assyrians and

Babylonians to accomplish his purposes. God, he states, will be victorious over Israel's enemies. In this context, he emphasizes that the Lord has chosen Zerubbabel as his servant – he is to be God's signet ring:

The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, 'Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the thrones of kingdoms: I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders; and the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his fellow. On that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts.' (Haggai 2:20–3)

Zechariah, a contemporary of Haggai, also focuses on the importance of rebuilding the Temple. Although the Lord has punished Judah by sending its inhabitants into exile for seventy years, the nation has suffered sufficiently. Now God's mercies will be made known to his chosen people – the land will prosper and God's dwelling will be established in Jerusalem. Prophesying about such a glorious future, Zechariah foretells that a king will come who will reign over the people. In a vision of hope, the prophet describes this Messianic figure who will be a descendant of David. He shall enter the city in triumph riding upon an ass: 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass' (Zechariah 9:9). According to Zechariah, God will redeem his people – he will strengthen them and bring them back to Zion; the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as though they had never been rejected.

Like Haggai and Zechariah, the prophet Malachi was a post-exilic prophet active after the exiles returned from Babylonia. In his view, Israel's sinfulness caused the Lord great distress. In order to remedy such transgression, God prophesied to send his messenger to prepare the way for the Lord's entry into his Temple: 'Behold I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his Temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight; behold he is coming, says the Lord of hosts' (Malachi 3:1). However, because of their iniquity the people will not be able to deal with such a message – the coming of the Lord will thus not bring about Israel's salvation. Rather, it will be like a refiner's fire that will purify the nation.

The prophet insists that the promise of God's forgiveness and restoration will be fulfilled. Even though Israel has been iniquitous, God will return to his people if they seek him. In the final section of the book, Malachi describes the day of the Lord: it will be a time of destruction for the wicked and reward for those who fear his name. In conclusion Malachi announces that God will send the prophet Elijah before the day of the Lord so that the nation will be reconciled:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children

and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse. (Malachi 4:5–6)

THE PSALMS AND DANIEL

In addition to predictions about a future salvation of Israel found in the prophetic writings, the book of Psalms contains numerous references to divine deliverance. The first of the Messianic psalms begins with tumult. The world is in agitation – kings and princes have rebelled against God and his anointed. Yet, the Lord will prevail:

He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord has them in derision.
Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
‘I have set my king
on Zion, my holy hill.’
I will tell of the decree of the Lord:
He said to me, ‘You are my son,
today I have begotten you.
Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.’ (Psalm 2:4–8)

The allusion to the enthronement of the king is echoed in Psalm 110; here there is the same promise of victory over the enemies of the Lord:

The Lord says to my lord:
‘Sit at my right hand,
till I make your enemies your footstool.’
The Lord sends forth from Zion
your mighty sceptre.
Rule in the midst of your foes! (Psalm 110:1–2)

The subsequent verses promise defeat of Israel’s enemies:

He will execute judgment among the nations,
filling them with corpses;
he will shatter chiefs
over the wide earth. (Psalm 110:6)

Other psalms, traditionally attributed to King Solomon, present a different picture of this future king: he is the righteous ruler and the guarantee of the nation’s prosperity:

Give the king thy justice, O God,
and thy righteousness to the royal son!
May he judge the people with righteousness,

and thy poor with justice!
Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness!
May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor! (Psalm 72:1–4)

For the psalmist there is a fundamental link between the righteousness of the king and the fruitfulness of the land. Repeatedly the moral character of his rule is expressed:

For he delivers the needy when he calls,
the poor and him who has no helper.
He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight. (Psalm 72:12–14)

Continuing the theme of kingly rule, Psalm 21 states that the king is God's beloved whom he has given long life, victory, glory and majesty:

Thou hast given him his heart's desire,
and has not withheld the request of his lips.
For thou dost meet him with goodly blessings;
thou dost set a crown of fine gold upon his head.
He asked life of thee; thou gavest it to him,
length of days for ever and ever.
His glory is great through thy help;
splendour and majesty thou dost bestow upon him.
Yea, thou dost make him most blessed for ever;
thou dost make him glad with the joy of thy presence. (Psalm 21:2–6)

Connected with this notion of kingly rule, Psalm 132 contains God's promise to David that a scion of his dynasty will always reign in Israel:

The Lord swore to David a sure oath
from which he will not turn back:
'One of the sons of your body
I will set on your throne.
If your sons keep my covenant
and my testimonies which I shall teach them,
their sons also for ever
shall sit upon your throne.' (Psalm 132:11–12)

In summary, then, the book of Psalms depicts the king as the Anointed of the Lord; he is placed by the Lord on his throne, proclaimed as his son, and appointed

to maintain righteousness and justice throughout the land. Through his actions he conveys divine blessing to his people, fertility to the soil, and victory over foreign powers. Ruling over the entire world, his throne is established for all time.

Turning from the Psalms to the book of Daniel, a different picture is given of such a divinely anointed deliverer. According to tradition, Daniel lived in Babylonia in the sixth century BCE during the final days of the Babylonian empire; most scholars, however, contend that the book was written in the second century BCE. [Chapters 7](#) to [12](#) consist of a series of dreams foretelling future events. The first is a vision of beasts – a lion, bear, leopard and another creature terrifying in appearance. Each of these beasts symbolizes an empire: the lion corresponds to Babylonia; the bear the Medo-Persian empire; the leopard that of Alexander the Great; the fourth creature Rome. The theme is that Babylonia will be succeeded by these other empires until God's everlasting reign will be established. Here Daniel refers to one like a Son of Man who will be given dominion over all the earth:

I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
And to him was given dominion
and glory and kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13–14)

In the next vision a ram representing the Medo-Perisan kings is succeeded by a goat – this denotes the king of the empire established by Alexander the Great. According to some scholars Daniel 8:23–5 refers to the coming of the Syrian King Antiochus IV, an enemy of the Jews:

And at the latter end of their rule, when the transgressors have reached their full measure, a king of bold countenance, one who understands riddles, shall arise. His power shall be great, and he shall cause fearful destruction, and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people of the saints.

These visions are followed by Daniel's prayer for deliverance despite the Israelites' sinfulness. Here Daniel appeals to God's mercy to deliver his people from their plight. In a response, Daniel is assured concerning the future of Jerusalem and the coming of the Anointed One:

Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity,

to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. (Daniel 9:24–5)

This supplication is followed in [chapter 10](#) by a vision of the last days. On the fourth day of the first month, a man clothed in linen whose loins were girded with rich gold of Uphaz appeared on the Tigris. In a series of speeches, he strengthened and encouraged Daniel, revealing to him later kings who would reign during the period of Greek rule. This passage is followed by prophecies concerning an unknown king, and a final assurance that the Lord will remain faithful to his people:

And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. (Daniel 12:1–3)

THE APOCRYPHA

Throughout Ben Sira (c. 190–170 BCE) the love of Israel is manifest; in the author's view, Israel is pre-eminent among the nations. Such dedication is manifest even when he is discussing abstract ideas. Hence in [chapter 35](#), while discussing the plight of the oppressed, he turns to God's chosen people:

Yea, the Lord will not tarry
And the mighty One will not refrain himself
Till he smite the loins of the merciless,
And requite vengeance (to the arrogant);
Till he dispossess the sceptre of pride,
And the staff of wickedness utterly cut down;
Till he redeem to man his due,
And recompense people according to their devising,
Till he plead the cause of his people,
And rejoice them with salvation. (Ben Sira 35:22–5)

The next chapter makes it clear that this vision is of the Age to Come. This prayer of hope is filled with Messianic expectation:

Save us, O God of all,
And cast thy fear upon all the nations.
Shake thy hand against the strange people,
And let them see thy power.
As thou has sanctified thyself in us before them,
So glorify thyself in them before us;

That they may know, as we also know,
That there is none other God but thee.
Renew the signs, and repeat the wonders,
Make Hand and Right Arm glorious.
Waken indignation and pour out wrath,
Subdue the foe and expel the enemy.
Hasten the 'end' and ordain 'the appointed time'. . .
Gather all the tribes of Jacob,
That they may receive their inheritance as in the days of old.
Compassionate the people that is called by thy name.
Israel, whom thou didst surname Firstborn.
Compassionate thy holy city,
Jerusalem, the place of thy dwelling.
Fill Sion with thy majesty,
And thy temple with thy glory . . .
That all the ends of the earth may know
That thou art the eternal God. (36:1-22)

This passage outlines the various stages of Messianic anticipation – the destruction of Israel's enemies, the sanctification of God's name by elevating the Jewish nation, the performance of miracles, the ingathering of the exiles, the glorification of Jerusalem and the Temple, reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked, and the fulfilment of prophetic expectations.

Although Ben Sira does not specify that salvation will come through Davidic rule or an individual Messiah, the author does specify that the house of David will be preserved. As a reward for his accomplishments, God gave him the decree of the kingdom and established his throne over Jerusalem (Ben Sira 47:11). Later in the same chapter he adds:

Nevertheless God did not forsake his mercy,
Nor did he suffer any of his words to fall to the ground.
He will not cut off the posterity of his chosen,
Nor will he destroy the offspring of them that love him.
And he will give to Jacob a remnant,
And to the house of David a root from him. (Ben Sira 47:22)

Just as the kingdom of David will last for ever, so will the priesthood of Aaron:

And he exalted a holy one (like unto him),
Even Aaron of the tribe of Levi.
And he made him an eternal ordinance,
And bestowed upon him his majesty. (Ben Sira 45:6-7)

Thus, not only does he believe in the continuation of the house of David, but also in the perpetuity of the priesthood of Aaron. In another passage, both of these institutions are coupled together:

Therefore for him, too, he established an ordinance,
A covenant of peace to maintain the sanctuary:
that to him and to his seed should appertain
The High-Priesthood for ever.
Also his covenant was with David,
The son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah;
The inheritance of the king is his son's alone,
While the inheritance of Aaron (belongs) to him and to his seed.
(Ben Sira 45:24–5)

In Ben Sira there is a further future expectation – the coming of Elijah in the Messianic Age. After describing the mighty deeds of the prophet, he adds:

Who art ready for the time, as it is written,
To still wrath before the fierce anger of God,
To turn the heart of the fathers unto the children,
And to restore the tribes of Israel. (Ben Sira 48:10)

For Ben Sira, not only will the Jewish people endure for all time, but they will be a light to the gentiles. Speaking of Abraham and his descendants, the author declares:

Therefore with an oath he promised him
To bless the nations in his seed,
To multiply him 'as the dust of the earth',
And to exalt his seed 'as the stars';
To cause them to inherit 'from sea to sea
And from the River to the ends of the earth'. (Ben Sira 44:21)

Turning to the apocryphal Baruch (early part c. 130 BCE; later part c. 90 BCE), in the [first part](#) of this work there is a reference to the idea that God will bring about the return of the exiles to the land of their fathers once they have turned from their evil ways (Baruch 2:24–35). Later in the book the author describes Jerusalem which is to be renewed:

O Jerusalem, look about thee toward the east,
And behold the joy that cometh unto thee from God.
Lo, thy sons come, whom thou sentest away,
They come gathered together from the east to the west (at
the word of the Holy One),
Rejoicing in the glory of God.
Put off, O Jerusalem, the garment of thy mourning and affliction,
And put on the comeliness of the glory that cometh from God
for ever.
Cast about thee the robe of the righteousness which cometh
from God;
Set a diadem on thine head of the glory of the Everlasting.

For God will show thy brightness unto every region under heaven.
For thy name shall be called of God for ever
The peace of righteousness, and the glory of godliness.

(Baruch 4:36 – 5:4)

The book continues with a description of the return of the exiles:

Arise, O Jerusalem, and stand upon the height,
And look about thee toward the east,
And behold thy children gathered from the going down of the
 sun unto the rising thereof (at the word of the Holy One),
Rejoicing that God hath remembered them.
For they went from thee on foot,
Being led away of their enemies:
But God bringeth them in unto thee
Borne on high with glory, as on a royal throne.
For God hath appointed that every high mountain, and the
 everlasting hills, should be made low,
That Israel may go safely in the glory of God.
Moreover the woods and every sweet-smelling tree have
 overshadowed Israel (by the commandment of God).
For God shall lead Israel with joy in the light of his glory
With the mercy and righteousness that cometh from him. (Baruch 5:5–9)

Alluding to Second Isaiah's vision of the ingathering of the exiles, the author depicts the re-establishment of Zion in glowing terms.

Unlike earlier apocryphal works that predict the transformation of earthly life, 2 Maccabees (c. 70 BCE) speculates about the nature of eternal life. Here the author emphasizes that reward and punishment are to be meted out in a future world. Of particular importance is a passage, presumably critical of Sadducean doctrine, stating that Judas Maccabaeus was 'bearing in mind the resurrection – for if he had not expected the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and silly to pray for the dead' (2 Maccabees 12:43–4). Here the resurrection of the dead is conceived in bodily terms. Elsewhere the author contends that only the righteous will be restored to life; for sinners like Antiochus Epiphanes there is no deliverance from death.

Finally like 2 Maccabees, the Wisdom of Solomon is preoccupied with the World to Come, eternal life, and divine retribution. Thus in [chapter 3](#) the author describes the reward for the righteous:

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
and no torment shall touch them.
In the eyes of fools they seemed to die;
And their departure was accounted to be their hurt,
And their going from us to be their ruin:
But they are in peace.
For though in the sight of men they be punished,
Their hope is full of immortality. (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1–4)

Turning to the destruction of the wicked, he describes the future Day of the Lord:

He shall sharpen stern wrath for a sword:
And the world shall go forth with him to fight against
his insensate foes,
Shafts of lightning shall fly with true aim,
And from the clouds, as from a well drawn bow, shall
they leap to the mark.
And as from an engine of war shall be hurled hailstones
full of wrath;
The water of the sea shall rage against them,
And rivers shall sternly overwhelm them;
A mighty blast shall encounter them,
And as a tempest shall it winnow them away:
So shall lawlessness make all the land desolate,
And their evil-doing shall overturn the thrones of princes.
(*Wisdom of Solomon* 5:20–3)

THE ETHIOPIC BOOK OF ENOCH

Although the early parts of the Ethiopic *Book of Enoch* date from c. 110 BCE, its later parts were in all probability composed after the destruction of the Temple. Here the author presents a variety of reflections about the Messianic Age beginning with the Day of Judgement. During this period the Day of the Lord was identified with the 'birth pangs of the Messiah' – this did not refer to any suffering of the Messiah himself, but to the tribulations of the Messianic Age. In the *Book of Enoch* these events are portrayed in dramatic terms. The Holy Lord will come forth from his dwelling, appear from the highest of heavens and tread on Mount Sinai. As a consequence people will be overcome with fear and anguish will spread through the world. The mountains will be shaken, the high hills made low, and the earth sink; everyone will then undergo judgement. The righteous will be rewarded, whereas the wicked will be punished for their deeds (*Enoch* 1:3–9).

Not only will the wicked be chastised; so too will Satan and the angels who have corrupted the earth be brought to judgement. In addition, evil spirits, demons and devils will be condemned. The righteous, however, will prosper:

Then shall they rejoice with joy and be glad,
And into the holy place shall they enter;
And its fragrance shall be in their bones,
And they shall live a long life on earth,
Such as their fathers lived:
And in their days shall no sorrow or plague
Or torment of calamity touch them. (*Enoch* 25:6)

In other passages the destruction to be visited upon the world is described in detail: severe affliction will come upon the world: the destitute will abandon their children, pregnant women will miscarry, and mothers will cast sucklings away:

In those days the nations shall be stirred up,
And the families of the nations shall arise on the day of destruction.
And in those days the destitute shall go forth and carry off their children,
And they shall abandon them, so that their children shall
perish through them:
Yea, they shall abandon their children (that are still)
sucklings, and not return to them,
And shall have no pity on their beloved ones. (*Enoch* 99:4–5)

On those days fathers and sons will be slain in one place; and brothers will fall together:

And in those days in one place the fathers together with their
sons shall be smitten
And brothers one with another shall fall in death
Till the streams flow with their blood. (*Enoch* 100:1)

As far as the Messianic Age is concerned, the *Book of Enoch* states that only the elect will be worthy of entering the divine realm. They will live and never sin again, and there will be light and knowledge for the worthy:

And then there shall be bestowed upon the elect wisdom,
And they shall all live and never again sin . . .
And they shall not again transgress,
Nor shall they sin all the days of their life,
Nor shall they die of (the divine) anger or wrath,
But they shall complete the number of the days of their life.
(*Enoch* 5:8–9)

As far as the terrestrial Messianic expectations are concerned, at the end of days the righteous will be delivered, beget a thousand children, and complete all their days in peace. The whole earth will be filled with righteousness and the fields will prosper. Along with such material prosperity, the *Book of Enoch* describes the spiritual renewal that will take place during the Days of the Messiah. The Lord will open the storehouses of heavenly blessing, which he will pour out upon the faithful:

And in those days I will open the store chambers of blessing which are in the heaven, so as to spread them down upon the earth over the work and labour of the children of men. And truth and peace shall be associated together throughout all the days of the world and throughout all the generations of men. (*Enoch* 11:1–2)

In the historical section of the book, the author presents the history of the world and the Jewish people to the present day – all of this is a prelude to the Days of the Messiah. Like the author of the book of Daniel, historical characters take the form of various creatures. After surveying the rise and fall of empires, the author

goes on to describe the Day of Judgement, which is followed by the Days of the Messiah. The Messiah, he states, is a 'white bull with large horns', and all the beasts of the field and birds of the air fear and make supplications to him.

Added to this conception of the Messianic Age is a detailed description of the Messiah in chapters 37–71. Here it is asserted that the Messiah existed before the creation of the world. His dwelling-place is under the wings of the God of Spirits where the elect shall pass before him:

And in that place mine eyes saw the Elect One of righteousness and of
faith,
And I saw his dwelling-place under the wings of the Lord of Spirits.
And righteousness shall prevail in his days,
And the righteous and elect shall be without number before him for ever
and ever.
And all the righteous and elect before him shall be strong as fiery lights,
And their mouth shall be full of blessing. (*Enoch* 39:6–7)

On that day the Elect One will sit on the throne of glory and choose the occupations of men and their dwelling-places; their spirits will grow strong when they see the Messiah, and heaven and earth will be transformed. The elect will then dwell in a new and blessed earth upon which sinners and evildoers will not set foot:

On that day Mine Elect One shall sit on the throne of glory
And shall try their works,
And their places of rest shall be innumerable.
And their souls shall glory strong within them when they see
Mine Elect ones,
And those who have called upon My glorious name:
Then will I cause Mine Elect One to dwell among them.
And I will transform the heavens and make it an eternal
blessing and light:
And I will transform the earth and make it a blessing:
And I will cause Mine Elect ones to dwell upon it:
But the sinners and evil-doers shall not set foot thereon.
(*Enoch* 45:3–5)

The next chapter begins with imagery drawn from the book of Daniel:

And I asked the angel who went with me and showed me all the hidden things, concerning that Son of Man, who he was, and whence he was, (and) why he went with the Head of Days? And he answered and said unto me:

This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness,
With whom dwelleth righteousness,
and who revealeth all the treasures of that which is hidden,

Because the Lord of Spirits hath chosen him,
And whose lot hath the pre-eminence before the Lord of Spirits
in uprightness for ever.
And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen
Shall raise up the kings and the mighty from their seats
(And the strong from their thrones)
And shall loosen the reins of the strong,
And break the teeth of the sinners. (*Enoch* 46:2–4)

In [chapter 47](#) the Ancient of Days is depicted on the throne of glory where the books of the living will be opened before him:

In those days I saw the Head of Days when he seated himself upon
the throne of his glory,
and the books of the living were opened before him:
And all his host which is in heaven above and his counsellors
stood before him,
And the hearts of the holy were filled with joy. (*Enoch* 47:3)

In the next sections the importance of the Messiah is emphasized. He will be a staff to the righteous and holy, and a light to the gentiles. All who dwell on earth will worship and bless him and praise the God of Spirits. During the Days of the Messiah wisdom will be like the waters that cover the sea, and the glory of the Lord will be revealed. At this time drastic changes will take place in nature. The earth will bring to life those who have died and the Messiah will choose from among those who have risen righteous and holy: he will sit upon his throne and reveal secret knowledge:

And in those days the earth shall also give back that which has
been entrusted to it,
And Sheol also shall give back that which it has received,
And hell shall give back that which it owes.
For in those days the Elect One shall arise,
And he shall choose the righteous and holy from among them:
For the day has drawn nigh that they should be saved.
(*Enoch* 51:1–2)

The latter part of the book adds new features to the presentation of the Messiah and his relation to the righteous. All the heavenly powers praise the Elect One; he will be seated on the throne of glory as he judges the deeds of the holy:

And the Lord of Spirits placed the Elect One on the throne of glory.
And he shall judge all the works of the holy above in the heaven,
and in the balance shall their deeds be weighed. (*Enoch* 61:8)

Then God commands the mighty kings and exalted rulers to recognize the Elect One as they see him seated on the throne with the spirit of righteousness poured out upon him:

And he will summon all the host of the heavens, and all the holy ones above, and the host of God, the Cherubim, Seraphim and Ophannim, and all the angels of power, and all the angels of principalities, and the Elect One, and the other powers on the earth (and) over the water. On that day they shall raise one voice, and bless and glorify and exalt in the spirit of faith, and in the spirit of wisdom, and in the spirit of patience, and in the spirit of mercy, and in the spirit of judgment and of peace, and in the spirit of goodness, and shall all say with one voice: 'Blessed is he, and may the name of the Lord of Spirits be blessed for ever and ever.' (*Enoch* 61:10–11)

On this day the righteous and elect will be saved; the God of Spirits will abide over them and with the Son of Man they will eat and lie down and rise up forever:

And the Lord of Spirits will abide over them.
And with that Son of Man shall they eat
And lie down and rise up for ever and ever.
And they shall have been clothed with garments of glory,
And these shall be the garments of life from the Lord of Spirits:
and your garments shall not grow old,
Nor your glory pass away before the Lord of Spirits. (*Enoch* 62:15–16)

JUBILEES, TESTAMENT OF THE TWELVE PATRIARCHS, AND PSALMS OF SOLOMON

Written in c. 100–90 BCE, the *Book of Jubilees* does not refer to a King–Messiah – in all likelihood this omission was due to the fact that at the time of its composition there existed an anointed king and priest of the house of Levi. Nonetheless, the book does contain Messianic ideas similar to those found in the Apocrypha. Because of the nation's sinfulness, the people will be punished; this will be followed by repentance, and only then will Israel will be redeemed. The Lord will build his sanctuary in their midst and dwell among them: 'And I will build my sanctuary in their midst, and I will dwell with them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people in truth and righteousness' (*Jubilees* 1:18).

Then a new world will be made: heaven and earth and all creatures will be renewed and the sanctuary of the Lord will be manifest in Jerusalem on Mount Zion.

In [Chapter 23](#) the process of salvation is described in detail. After fearful punishment, there will be complete repentance and then divine redemption:

And all their days they shall complete and live in peace
and joy,
And there shall be no Satan nor any evil destroyer;
For all their days shall be days of blessing and healing.

And at that time the Lord will heal his servants,
And they shall rise up and see great peace,
And drive out their adversaries.
And the righteous will see and be thankful,
And rejoice with joy for ever and ever,
And shall see all their judgments and their curses on their
enemies. (*Jubilees* 23:29–30)

The *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (c. 110–70 BCE) consists of ethical injunctions preceded by stories about the tribal patriarchs. In the last section of the *Testament of Simeon* there is a lofty Messianic oracle. Here Simeon encourages his sons to remove their envy and stiff-neckedness. Then, he states:

As a rose shall my bones flourish in Israel,
And as a lily my flesh in Jacob,
And my odour shall be as the odour of Libanus;
And as cedars shall holy ones be multiplied from me for ever,
and their branches shall stretch afar off.
Then shall perish the seed of Canaan,
And a remnant shall not be unto Amalek,
And all the Cappadocians shall perish,
And all the Hittites shall be utterly destroyed.
Then shall fail the land of Ham
And all the people shall perish.
Then shall all the earth rest from trouble
And all the world under heaven from war.
Then the Mighty One of Israel shall glorify Shem,
For the Lord God shall appear on earth,
And Himself save men. (*Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* 6:2–5)

Again, in the *Testament of Levi*, there is a depiction of divine redemption. After punishment has come from the Lord, he will raise up to the priestly office a new priest to whom all the words of God will be revealed; he will then execute judgment upon the earth:

Then shall the Lord raise up a new priest.
And to him all the words of the Lord shall be revealed;
And he shall execute a righteous judgment upon the earth
for a multitude of days
And his star shall arise in heaven as of a king.
Lighting up the light of knowledge as the sun the day.
And he shall be magnified in the world.
He shall shine forth as the sun on the earth,
And shall remove all darkness from under heaven,
And there shall be peace in all the earth.
The heavens shall exult in his days,

And the earth shall be glad
And the clouds shall rejoice;
(And the knowledge of the Lord shall be poured upon the
earth, as the waters of the seas)
And the angels of the glory of the presence of the Lord shall be
glad in him.
The heavens shall be opened,
And from the temple of glory shall come upon him sanctification.
(*Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* 18:2–6)

The *Testament of Judah* also contains a vivid description of Messianic redemption. The star of peace will arise and walk in meekness among men. The heavens will be opened and pour out their blessings. The spirit of truth will come upon the children of Judah. A shoot will come forth from the stock of Judah and the rod of righteousness will be in his hand to judge and save all those who call upon him. All the tribes will become one people and have one language. Those who died in grief will arise and awake to everlasting life. The hungry will be satisfied, the poor made rich, and the weak become strong:

And ye shall be the people of the Lord, and have one tongue;
And there shall be no spirit of deceit of Beliar,
For he shall be cast into the fire for ever.
And they who have died in grief shall arise in joy,
And they who were poor for the Lord's sake shall be made rich,
And they who are put to death for the Lord's sake shall awake to life.
(*Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* 25:3–4)

The *Psalms of Solomon* is a later book, written in c. 45 BCE, which enlarges on the personality of the Messiah. According to the author, the Hasmonean kings have acted wickedly; therefore it is a mistake to regard them as Messiahs. Turning to God, he prays for redemption, which he connects with the ingathering of the exiles:

Turn, O God, thy mercy upon us, and have pity upon us;
Gather together the dispersed of Israel, with mercy and goodness;
For thy faithfulness is with us.
And (though) we have stiffened our neck, yet thou art our chastener;
Overlook us not, O our God, lest the nations swallow us up, as
though there were none to deliver. (*Psalms of Solomon* 8:33–6)

Such Messianic predictions continue in *Psalms of Solomon* 11:

Blow ye in Zion on the trumpet to summon the saints,
Cause ye to be heard in Jerusalem the voice of him that
bringeth good tidings;
For God hath had pity on Israel in visiting them.
Stand on the height, O Jerusalem, and behold thy children,
From the East and the West, gathered together by the Lord;
From the North they come in the gladness of their God,

From the isles afar off God hath gathered them.
High mountains hath he abased into a plain for them;
The hills fled at their entrance . . .
Put on, O Jerusalem, thy glorious garments;
Make ready thy holy robe;
For God hath spoken good concerning Israel, for ever and ever.

(*Psalms of Solomon* 11:1-6, 8)

Continuing this Messianic theme, *Psalms of Solomon* 17 contains an accusation against the Hasmonean dynasty followed by a depiction of the redeemer of Israel:

Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of
David,
At the time in the which thou seest, O God, that he may reign over
Israel thy servant.
And gird him with strength, that he may shatter unrighteous
rulers,
And that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample (her)
down to destruction . . .
And he shall gather together a holy people, whom he shall lead
in righteousness,
And he shall judge the tribes of the people that has been sanctified
by the Lord his God . . .
And he shall have the heathen nations to serve him under
his yoke:
And he shall glorify the Lord in a place to be seen of all the
earth;
And he shall purge Jerusalem, making it holy as of old:
So that nations shall come from the ends of the earth to see
his glory,
Bringing as gifts her sons who had fainted,
And to see the glory of the Lord, wherewith God hath glorified her.
And he (shall be) a righteous king, taught of God, over them,
And there shall be no unrighteousness in his days in their midst,
For all shall be holy and their king the anointed of the Lord . . .
(He will be) shepherding the flock of the Lord faithfully and
righteously,
And will suffer none among them to stumble in their pasture.
He will lead them aright,
And there will be no pride among them that any among them should
be oppressed.
This (will be) the majesty of the king of Israel whom
God knoweth;
He will raise him up over the house of Israel to correct him.
His words (shall be) more refined than costly gold, the choicest;
In the assemblies he will judge the peoples, the tribes of the
sanctified.

His words (shall be) like the words of the holy ones in the midst
of sanctified peoples.

Blessed be they that shall be in those days,

In that they shall see the good fortune of Israel which God shall
bring to pass in the gathering together of the tribes.

(*Psalms of Solomon* 17:23–4; 28; 32–6; 45–50)

ASSUMPTION OF MOSES, SYRIAC BOOK OF BARUCH, 4 EZRA, AND THE SIBYLLINE ORACLES

Dating from c. 4–6 CE the *Assumption of Moses* does not contain an account of the Messiah; nonetheless in [chapter 10](#) there is a depiction of the Day of the Lord. According to the author, Israel will triumph over her enemies, and there will be bliss and freedom in the Age to Come:

And then his kingdom shall appear throughout all his creation,
And then Satan shall be no more,
And sorrow shall depart with him.
Then the hands of the angel shall be filled
Who has been appointed chief,
And he shall forthwith avenge them of their enemies.
For the Heavenly One will arise from his royal throne,
And he will go forth from his holy habitation
With indignation and wrath on account of his sons . . .
For the Most High will arise, the Eternal God alone,
And he will appear to punish the Gentiles,
And he will destroy all their idols.
Then thou, O Israel, shalt be happy,
And thou shalt mount upon the neck and wings of the eagle,
And they shall be ended.
And God will exalt thee,
And he will cause thee to approach to the heaven of the stars,
In the place of their habitation.
And thou shalt look from on high and shalt see thy enemies
in (Gehenna).
And thou shalt recognize them and rejoice,
And thou shalt give thanks and confess thy Creator.

(*Assumption of Moses* 10:1–3; 7–10)

Dating from c. 70–80 CE the *Syriac Book of Baruch* contains numerous Messianic expectations beginning with the birth pangs of the Messiah. The appointed time is coming – it will be a period of affliction:

Behold! the days come
And it shall be when the time of the age has ripened,
And the harvest of the seed of the good and the evil has come,

That the Mighty One will bring upon the earth,
And upon its inhabitants and its rulers,
Perturbation of spirit and anxiety of mind.
And they shall hate one another,
And provoke one another to fight;
And the mean shall rule over the honorable,
And those of low degree shall be extolled above the famous.
And the many shall be delivered into the hands of few,
And those who were nothing shall rule over the strong;
And the poor shall have control over the rich,
And the impious shall exalt themselves above the heroic.
And the wise shall be silent,
And the foolish shall speak. (*Syriac Book of Baruch* 48:53–4)

These events are to be followed by the coming the Messiah. After the signs have appeared, the Messiah will appear and he shall rule in peace and glory:

And then healing shall descend in dew,
And disease shall withdraw,
And anxiety and anguish and lamentation pass from amongst men,
And gladness proceed through the whole earth;
And no one shall again die untimely,
Nor shall any adversity suddenly befall.
And judgments and revilings and contentions and revenges,
And blood and passions and envy and hatred,
And whatsoever things are like these
Shall go into condemnation and be removed . . .
And wild beasts shall come from the forest
and minister unto men,
And asps and vipers shall come forth from their holes
to submit themselves to a little child;
And women shall no longer then
have pain when they bear,
Nor shall they suffer torment
when they yield the fruit of the womb . . .
For that time is the end of that which is corruptible,
And the beginning of that which is not corruptible.
Therefore those things which were predicted
shall belong to it;
Therefore it is far away from evildoers,
And near to those who do not die.

(*Syriac Book of Baruch* 73:1 – 74:3)

Central to the *Syriac Book of Baruch* is the notion of a new world that is different from the Messianic Age. This is the World to Come, a new era in which there is no end and the righteous will receive a great light:

And the hour comes which abides forever,
And the new world, which does not turn to corruption
those who enter into its blessedness,
And has no mercy on those who depart to torment,
And leads not to perdition those who live in it. (*Syriac Book of Baruch*
44:12)

Fourth Ezra, which dates from c. 90–100 CE, contains numerous Messianic expectations along similar lines. Here, too, are descriptions of the birth pangs of the Messiah. According to *4 Ezra*, the signs that will precede the coming of the Messiah include great confusion and desolation. Responding to the question when such signs will take place, Ezra receives new signs indicating that the end is near:

When in the world there shall appear
quakings of lands
tumult of peoples,
schemings of nations,
confusion of leaders,
disquietude of princes,
then shalt thou understand that is of these things the Most High has spoken since the days that were aforetime from the beginning. For just as with respect to all that has happened in the world, it has a beginning in the word (of God at creation) and a manifest end, so also are the times of the Most High: the beginnings are revealed in portents and powers, and the end in deed and in signs. (*4 Ezra* 8:62 – 9:6)

These occurrences are followed by the Messianic Age and the Day of Judgement. After the signs of the Messiah:

My Son the Messiah shall be revealed, together with those who are with him (the righteous), and the survivors shall rejoice for four hundred years. And it shall be, after these years, that My Son the Messiah shall die, and all in whom there is human breath. Then shall the world be turned into the primeval silence seven days, like as at the first beginnings, so that no man is left. And it shall be after seven days that the age which is now asleep shall be roused, and that which is corruptible (the age of corruption) shall perish. And the earth shall restore those that sleep in her, and the dust those that are at rest therein; and the chambers shall restore those that were committed unto them. (*4 Ezra* 7:26–32)

The end of the world and the beginning of the World to Come is initiated by the Day of Judgement. Then

the Most High shall be revealed
on the throne of judgment,

and then cometh the End.
And compassion shall pass away,
and long suffering be withdrawn;
But judgment alone shall remain,
truth shall stand,
and faithfulness triumph.
And recompense shall follow,
and reward be made manifest;
Deeds of righteousness shall away,
and deeds of iniquity shall not be repeated.
Then shall the pit of torment appear,
and over against it the place of refreshment;
The furnace of Gehenna shall be made manifest,
and over against it the Paradise of delight. (4 *Ezra* 7:33–6)

In a series of Messianic visions, the personality and work of the Messiah are depicted. From before the creation of the world he existed, and he is being kept with God until the time for him to be revealed. He is as strong as a lion and swift as an eagle, able to dominate all those who seek to wage war against him.

Finally, the *Sibylline Oracles* whose contents date from c. 140 BCE to 130 CE, contain a variety of Messianic ideas. Book 3 describes the confrontation between God and the anti-Messiah Beliar; here the Lord is victorious, bringing about the transformation of nature:

Now from the Sebastenes shall Beliar come, and he shall move the high mountains, still the sea, make the great blazing sun and the bright moon stand still, raise the dead, and do many signs among men; but his signs shall not be effective in him. Yet he leads many astray, and shall deceive many faithful and elect of the Hebrews, and lawless men besides, who never have hearkened to God's word. But when the threatened vengeance of the Almighty God draws near, and a fiery power comes through the deep to land and burns up Beliar and all men of pride, even all that put their trust in him – then shall the world be ruled beneath a woman's hand and obey her in all things. And when a widow rules over the whole world, and casts gold and silver into the deep sea with the bronze and iron of short-lived mortals, then shall all the elements of the world be as one widowed, when God that dwelleth in the heavens shall roll up the sky as a book is rolled up. And the whole firmament with its many signs shall fall upon the earth and the sea; and then shall flow a ceaseless torrent of liquid fire, and shall burn up the earth and burn up the sea; and the firmament of heaven and the stars and creation it shall melt into one molten mass and clean dissolve. (*Sibylline Oracles*, Book 3, 63–87)

Reversing the order of other works, the *Sibylline Oracles* depicts the war with Gog and Magog after the advent of the Messianic Age. Then the children of Israel will dwell on their own soil with the King Messiah ruling over them. He will put an

end to all wars on the earth and make a covenant with the righteous. After the war, all the sons of God will live quietly around the Temple, rejoicing in their salvation. Then all the peoples will see God's mercies and turn to him. They will acknowledge the rightness of the commandments and forsake their idols. Then humanity will live in peace:

When this destined day is fully come . . . the fertile earth shall yield her best fruit of corn and wine and oil and sweet honey from heaven for drink, treats bearing fruit after their kind, flocks of sheep, oxen, lambs, and kids of the goats . . . No war nor drought shall afflict the land, no dearth nor hail to spoil the crops, but deep peace over all the earth. (*Sibylline Oracles*, Book 3, 741–55)

Then all the earth will be filled with knowledge of God; famine will cease, wars will be ended, and one system of law will prevail for all.

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CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

SALVATION IN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT



Andrew Chester

Salvation is a central emphasis in early Christian thought from the earliest stages. Fundamental to this is the fact that the death of Jesus is seen as a saving event. The most profound and best-known exposition is that of Paul. His basic position can be summed up quite simply: the death of Christ potentially brings about salvation for all. This is worked out in a number of different ways, using a variety of metaphors, and involves several difficult questions. The central theme, that Christ's death has final, saving effect, is found not only in Paul (Williams 1975) but in most of the rest of the New Testament as well (Grayston 1990). It is therefore important to do justice, as far as possible within the constraints here, to this theme, its different facets, implications and problems, and to the distinctive emphasis of the different writings. Along with this, and indeed as preliminary to it, it is worth asking whether what we find in much of the New Testament is true to what Jesus himself understood about his own death and its significance.

First, however, it needs to be made clear that the use of the term and concept 'salvation' is in itself something quite remarkable in a first-century context. It is perhaps above all because Paul's position has become so important and influential that it may appear to us completely obvious that salvation should be set at the heart of Christianity, and should perhaps indeed be seen as central to any major religious system. Yet the fact is that both Paul and Jesus, whatever else they were, were Jews of the first century, and for these 'salvation' (in the sense it acquires in developed Christian theology) would seem strange (Sanders 1977; Loewe 1981). The focus of Jewish usage would be much more obviously on deliverance and release, and being brought back to health and safety. Hence the sense 'salvation' takes on in the New Testament is itself notable; whether it is a justifiable and coherent development is something we need to investigate.

JESUS

We come, then, in the light of this, to Jesus. The question that obviously arises, in view of the very early and emphatic interpretation of his death as a saving event, is whether he himself points in this direction as well. There does not, at least at first sight, appear to be much evidence for this. If such evidence is lacking, it does not

of course necessarily mean that it is invalid for Paul and others to interpret his death as they do and make it central to their theology. But clearly it would raise the question of whether there is genuine continuity and consistency between what Jesus sets in motion and what Paul and others are responsible for developing as a movement, and as an understanding of the movement's founding figure.

The most obvious, and famous, place in the gospels where Jesus does have a 'Pauline' view of his death is Mark 10.45 (and parallels): 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (and 'many' here is best understood as Semitic usage for 'all'). This looks clear and impressive (Jeremias 1971; Stuhlmacher 1986). To many scholars, however, it looks too good (or too close to Paul) to be true. That is, its authenticity has been strongly questioned (Bultmann 1965; Sanders 1985); it is seen as a form of words, set on Jesus' lips, to conform to the main view held in the early church and to show Jesus anticipating his death and making sense in advance of this horrendous event. Hence it would be dangerous to base too much, initially at least, on this verse; if a case is to be made for Jesus interpreting his death in a redemptive sense, it will be important to establish a different and wider basis.

There are certainly arguments and evidence that can be used to make this kind of case (Wenham 1995), although inevitably some will find them more convincing than others. It is quite plausible that Jesus predicted his own death (Bayer 1986). In Palestine in the first century, the Roman and Jewish authorities were quick to put to death leaders of popular movements (whether or not they were threatening violence), and figures such as John the Baptist who were openly critical of the authorities. Hence Jesus would easily have seen it as probable that he would be put to death, especially in view of his own confrontation with the authorities and the offence he caused them. He could even have seen his death as inevitable and as part of the divine plan: that is, as necessary to fulfil scripture and to help bring in the kingdom. So, for example, at the Last Supper (Mark 14.22–6 and parallels), Jesus appears to see his death as imminent (and it was, of course, immediately following the Last Supper that he was arrested and put on trial), and the final realization of the kingdom as bound up with and lying just beyond it (cf. Luke 22.15–16). The Last Supper was in all probability celebrated as a Passover meal (Jeremias 1966); hence Jesus could be pointing to his death as helping to bring about a new Exodus or final deliverance. According to one tradition (Luke 22.20; cf. 1 Cor. 11.25), he understood his broken body and outpoured blood as helping bring in the 'new covenant', that is, the new and fully and finally transformed relationship (Jer. 31.31–4). In Mark 14.24 he speaks of his blood being poured out 'for many'. This calls to mind not only Mark 10.45, but also Isaiah 53.12. Hence Jesus could be pointing (as also in the Mark 10.45 tradition) to his death as that of the righteous, innocent, Suffering Servant of Isaiah (thus Hengel 1981, in contrast to Hooker 1959; Barrett 1967). There was by the first century a strong Jewish tradition of vicarious martyr's death and redemptive suffering (e.g. 2 Macc. 7; 4 Macc. 17). Jesus may then consciously have aligned himself with this, and even seen his death as bound up with the forgiveness he offered openly, indeed offensively, as far as the Jewish authorities were concerned.

All of this is possible, and needs to be reckoned with seriously. It would clearly mean that Mark 10.45 could be understood as consistent with what Jesus says, and

acts out, otherwise. Yet there are also strong traditions, which are difficult to explain away, that Jesus was appalled at the prospect of his execution, and looked to God to avert it (Mark 14.32–42; 15.34; Barrett 1967). In this case, he could have expected divine intervention even at the very last moment. The fact remains, in any case, that the real heart of Jesus' message and ministry is liberation from evil, oppression, deformity and being despised. That is, the most striking aspect of the Synoptic Gospels' accounts of Jesus' life and teaching is that he is centrally concerned with providing healing and deliverance from all forces of evil as an integral part of the coming of the Kingdom of God. Above all, these forces of evil are thrown out in Jesus' exorcisms and healings, and the kingdom is already beginning to break in (Jeremias 1971). The thrust of what Jesus says and does is concentrated on the kingdom, with its enormously positive force and liberating potential, and Jesus himself is instrumental in bringing it in, or at least to the threshold of arrival. What is not clear, however, is that Jesus sees his own death as a necessary or even an integral part of this happening, or as having any saving or liberating effect in and of itself. His death at the hands of the authorities may seem inevitable, but it does not appear to be required for or causally connected with the coming of the kingdom. And it is the kingdom, imminently expected, where the truly liberating message and force of Jesus is to be found.

The Synoptic Gospels certainly have their own distinctive interpretations of Jesus' death (Hooker 1994). Thus for Mark it represents the beginning of a new people, covenant and Passover, and the pattern for a discipleship of taking up the cross. For Matthew, Jesus' death and resurrection constitute a cosmic event that brings about the resurrection of God's people. In Luke–Acts, Jesus *has* to die, and his death makes forgiveness available to all. Salvation pervades the whole of Jesus' ministry and the apostolic proclamation, and the church and new community owe their existence to Jesus' death. These are striking emphases, but the central focus for Jesus in the Synoptics is still, decisively, the kingdom. The most that Mark 10.45 or the account of the Last Supper may do is to suggest that Jesus' death can have symbolic significance within this wider context and in relation to this central theme (i.e. the kingdom and what it implies). It cannot, however, prove that Jesus' death in this manner is the core of God's salvific intervention and decisive act of deliverance, which is what Paul (and not only Paul, of course) makes Jesus' death to be. Jesus saw the future kingdom as the culmination of what had begun in his ministry. He also saw the salvation of Israel in a quite specific, down-to-earth sense, involving the overthrow of Israel's enemies and the restoration of divine sovereignty. His vision of this is certainly remarkable: it will not be brought about by violent means, but the disciples are promised a share in the rule of this kingdom, and outcasts and outsiders will share prominently in it as well. It is, then, a ministry of healing, casting out of evil, forgiveness and reconciliation, but there is no conclusive evidence that Jesus set his own violent death as necessary for this, still less as being the main focus.

PAUL

For Paul, by contrast, the main focus for salvation is the death of Christ. But we need then to ask what exactly is Paul's understanding of salvation. There are several

major aspects that have to be taken into account (Scott 1927). In one sense, this understanding can be seen as both *negative and positive*: that is, both what people are saved *from*, and also what they are saved *for*, as a new experience and way of life. Negatively, then, salvation for Paul means deliverance from death, from sin, from the curse and constraints of the law, and from an evil and immoral way of life. It also denotes deliverance from divine wrath, judgement and condemnation. Hence it can be said that salvation in Paul is to be understood as liberation from all forces and powers of evil, and thus overlaps considerably with the Gospels' portrayal of Jesus; but in fact the main emphasis in each case only coincides to a limited extent. Positively, salvation leads to a completely new way of life, characterized by being in Christ and filled with the Spirit. It is a way of life that involves a profoundly new relationship with God, characterized by peace, freedom and holiness.

Salvation also has both an *individual* and a *collective focus* in Paul's writings. It is true that Paul has often appeared to be simply individual in emphasis, and that can indeed be seen as his primary emphasis. So much is clear, for example, from the importance he attaches to *faith*. There is no merit in believing, but each individual has to respond in faith in order for the gift of salvation to take effect. In certain respects, then, there is a contrast here with Judaism, where all belong (by definition) within the covenant relationship (Sanders 1977). Yet there is also a collective aspect: Paul speaks in prospect of the Gentiles being saved and, famously, affirms that 'All Israel will be saved!' (Rom. 11.26). And in Romans 5.12–21 Paul speaks of 'acquittal and life for all', 'the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man Jesus Christ abounding for many', and 'many being made righteous' (where 'many' in both cases probably means 'all'). Here and in a few other places it appears that Paul's understanding of salvation is actually universalist. In fact, however, the most plausible interpretation of what Paul says is that salvation is *potentially* universalist in scope, but has to be *actualized* for each individual in order to be effective. Underlying this, of course, is the question of God's nature, as well as the scope and effect of Christ's death. That is, does God's love and mercy encompass all and apply to all with saving effect, whether or not there is specific human response? Or does failure to respond to, or wilful rejection of, the gospel put individuals (or, indeed, whole *groups* of people) outside the scope of God's saving work in Christ?

In a few places, the scope of salvation in Paul appears to be not only universal, but *cosmic* as well. Indeed, these overlap. The statement 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself' belongs to a context (2 Cor. 5.18–21) where the scope of salvation seems potentially all-embracing. Yet the reference here is not cosmic in any full sense: the 'world' has to be understood primarily in terms of the people in it. Romans 8.18–25 clearly goes further: the main focus in this passage is the whole created order, where it is said that it 'waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God'. Equally striking are Colossians 1.19–20: 'For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things to himself, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross', and Ephesians 1.9–10: 'according to (God's) purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to bring together all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth'.

All three of these passages represent a vision of the consummation of God's plan in cosmic terms. They are closely related to a strong Jewish visionary, or apocalyptic,

tradition. But the Pauline authorship of Colossians and Ephesians is disputed (especially so for Ephesians, which is very probably dependent on Colossians). That only leaves Romans 8 as a definitely Pauline vision of cosmic redemption. It portrays the whole created order being delivered from the forces of evil that have held it captive, and becoming part of God's domain again. Rhetorically it is impressive, but the detail is vague, and again it cannot be said that all *people* are set free, except *potentially* so. Notably, Romans 8 begins (8.1): 'There is now no condemnation for those in Christ'. Thus Paul's vision of salvation is individual, corporate and cosmic in scope, but the individual emphasis predominates, and responding by faith and being 'in Christ' are primary, indeed essential, elements of Paul's understanding.

Paul's concept of salvation also ranges over *past*, *present* and *future*. It is firmly rooted in the *past*: Christ's death is the saving event, which has already happened, is once-for-all and unrepeatable, and has inaugurated the final, eschatological age (so, e.g., Rom. 4.25; 5.6–8; 8.32). Not only the fact, but also the effect, of Christ's death can also be spoken of as in the past. 'Since then we have been justified by faith . . .' (Rom. 5.1); 'while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son' (Rom. 5.10); 'in this hope we were saved' (Rom. 8.24). Clearly Paul sees those who respond in faith to God's saving act in Christ as already saved. Yet Paul also speaks of 'being saved' as though it is a continuing process in the *present* (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.18; 2 Cor. 2.15, especially in contrast to those who 'are perishing'; cf. 1 Cor. 15.2). Nor is that all. Salvation is also set firmly in the *future*, as for example at Romans 5.9–10: 'we shall be saved by him from the wrath of God . . . we shall be saved by his life' (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15.2). This all seems confusing, if not indeed contradictory. In some cases those whose salvation is set in the future have not yet responded in faith, and so it is clear why there should be a distinction. But in Romans 5.9–11 there is a constant shifting between past and future in relation to the same group of people: they both have been saved and will be saved. And this is by no means an isolated instance in Paul.

How then is this apparent contradiction to be resolved? Romans 8.24 ('for we were saved in hope') may provide a clue. Where salvation is spoken of as something lying in the past it also has, implicitly, a future aspect as well. Paul's perspective, for his concept of salvation as much as for the rest of his life and thought, is above all *eschatological* (Pate 1995). One aspect of this is that Paul lives in expectation of the imminent final judgement. It is part of his Jewish heritage, but it is equally something he reckons with very seriously and not as a mere formality, both for himself and for his churches. So the future aspect of being saved refers at least, and perhaps primarily, to being delivered from condemnation and divine wrath in the final judgement. This does not mean that the past experience of being saved is emptied of meaning. Nor does it imply that the status of salvation is merely arbitrary and easily forfeited. But there is a real cutting edge to the final judgement, and Paul implies at least that some of those in the communities (e.g. at Corinth), who assume that they are saved, may find that in the end they are not. Hence we are faced with the paradox that Paul on the one hand gives absolute assurance of salvation, while on the other he seems to leave this still open to question. The contradiction, for Paul, is apparent, not real. He sees the response of faith as giving rise to a new life, filled with the Spirit and characterized by the fruits of the Spirit.

Hence, despite the fact that he stands in awe of the final judgement, he can see final deliverance as already assured.

Thus salvation for Paul is not something static. Nor is it something that simply happens at one point in the past, as though with magical effect. There is, of course, a decisive moment when the good news of salvation is accepted. But being saved is itself a continuing process; hence it is that Paul can speak of 'we who are being saved' (1 Cor. 1.18). And salvation is not an abstract idea for Paul. It is an urgent and pressing issue for everyone. The end is imminent, and the only important thing for each person is to make sure that they are within the sphere of God's saving grace. The present aspect of salvation is also caught up with this urgent emphasis: '*Now* is the time of salvation' (2 Cor. 6.2). The '*now*' is both urgently present and also eschatological; the two are bound up together. Paul does not at any point work with an extended time-scale; hence past, present and future all stand much closer together than we might assume. 'Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed' (Rom. 13.11), but it was never very far distant. And, as we have seen, living in the light of salvation means, for Paul, living in Christ, filled with the Spirit and being made a 'new creation'. It means, in short, living in a manner fit for the messianic age. Paul's very different statements about salvation cannot simply be collapsed into each other, but they are much less unconnected than might at first appear.

From this vantage point we may also be able to understand another apparently strange aspect of what Paul says. The major thrust of his position on salvation is that it is entirely God's gracious initiative and act of love; the human response of faith is necessary, but that is all. Ephesians 2.8–9 was probably written by a follower of Paul, not Paul himself, but it sums up his position very clearly: 'By grace you have been saved by faith; and this is not your own doing, it is a gift of God. It is not because of works, lest anyone should boast.' In view of this, some of Paul's statements are quite startling, even scandalous: 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling!' he tells the Philippians (Phil. 2.12). And at Colossians 1.24 we are confronted by the following (from Paul or someone very close to him): 'Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and I in my flesh make up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.' All this seems quite extraordinary. Is it not fundamental for Paul that Christ's death is the once-for-all, sole and sufficient source of salvation? What can possibly be *lacking* in Christ's suffering on the cross? And what part can humans possibly play in effecting their own salvation?

What Colossians 1.24 says, in apparently blasphemous fashion, is in fact echoed in part in other Pauline passages which speak of suffering for or on behalf of Christ. Paul clearly sees the afflictions and sufferings of believers as representing active participation in Christ's own suffering and death, and as belonging to the important and inevitable sufferings of the messianic age, which is now set in motion and that will culminate in the Kingdom of God. Such suffering can be understood, in one sense at least, as having redemptive significance; that is, it has a place within the overall redemptive plan of God, which is now coming to its climax. The primary place in this redemptive schema belongs of course to Christ and his death, and the suffering of Christians can only take on significance when it is set in relation to that, but Paul assigns to it at least indirect salvific purpose. Philippians 2.12 is very

difficult to explain. The idea that humans could 'work out' or 'bring about' their own salvation does indeed seem to go against all that Paul says otherwise. But from what immediately follows (2.14–16), it is clear that Paul is exhorting the Philippians to live transformed lives, pure and holy, fit for the new and final age. This is consistent with what we have seen already, and is an integral part of Paul's urgent eschatological message. It is precisely because the final days are now approaching that it is necessary to live holy lives. It is also precisely because of this sense of urgency that Paul can stress the importance of human agency in salvation. So he speaks of himself as 'saving' people (Rom. 11.14; 1 Cor. 9.22): he does so in the sense that he acts as the agent of divine salvation. The saving work is always God's, but human involvement is always present, in preaching the gospel, which enables people to respond, in the response in faith, and (as here) in ensuring that salvation is consistently worked out and taken hold of.

There are thus tensions (at times apparently bordering on contradictions) in Paul's understanding of salvation. Not all of these can easily be resolved, and at least to that extent it is not possible to give a fully coherent account. And Paul is writing letters (if very unusual letters!) for contingent and urgent circumstances (Beker 1980). So he nowhere sets out to present a systematic account of his thought (not even in Romans). Much of what we have considered, however (e.g. the past, present and future, individual and corporate reference of salvation), shows that Paul's thought is not monochrome, but is subtle and multifaceted. This is also reflected in the variety of impressive metaphors he uses to describe God's saving work in Christ (Scott 1927; Dunn 1998).

The most famous of these metaphors is that of *justification by faith* (Stuhlmacher 1986; Seifrid 1992). Justification represents essentially the language of the law-court: the point, then, is that God accounts as just or righteous those who in themselves have no righteousness. But Paul uses it in a strongly eschatological sense: this anticipates the verdict God will give at the final judgement. He reckons them righteous because they accept through faith what he has brought about in the death of Christ, which satisfies the just requirements of the law. Paul stresses that righteousness can come only thus, and not by observing the law (as he once held), or by human merit. For humans, being righteous depends entirely on God's grace. Paul thus transforms the legal categories. Justification is not a legal fiction (calling just what is not), but opens up a new relationship with God, which fulfils the covenant relationship and shows God to be true to his covenantal, righteous character (Ziesler 1972).

Where Paul speaks of *redemption* (e.g. Gal. 4.5; Rom. 3.24; 1 Cor. 6.2; 7.23; Gibbs 1971; Marshall 1990), God is pictured as buying back those who really belong to him already. The main focus of the metaphor is release from slavery. In Jewish tradition it denotes above all liberation from captivity at the Exodus, and hence deliverance from oppression in the final age. This is fundamental for Paul as well: what God has brought about in the death of Christ is deliverance, in the final age, from captivity to sin, law and death, and liberation from a condemned form of existence.

Occasionally Paul hints at Christ being a *sacrifice* (e.g. 1 Cor. 5, 7; 15.20, 23; Rom. 8.3, 32; Davies 1981; Dunn 1998), although only later (e.g. Eph. 5.2) is there a clear statement of Christ's death being a sacrifice or offering. The difficult and disputed Rom. 3.25 is also best understood in a sacrificial sense, although the idea

of Christ's death being a propitiatory sacrifice (Morris 1965), used by God to appease his own anger, is certainly to be rejected (Dodd 1935; Hooker 1994).

Paul uses the metaphor of *reconciliation* sparingly, but it comes at central points of his argument at 2 Corinthians 5.18–21 and Romans 5.10–11 (Martin 1981). It represents a powerful expression of his understanding of God's saving work in Christ. The imagery is that of mending a broken relationship. Paul emphasizes that Christ's death has broken down the barriers caused by sin and restored a right relationship with God. The usage is, then, above all personal and relational. Here (2 Cor. 5.21) it is said that Christ became sin (just as he became a 'curse', Gal. 3.13); that is, Christ shared the human condition of sin, death and alienation, so that humans could share in his overcoming of these (Hooker 1990).

None of these (or the other) metaphors that Paul uses is fully adequate to express his understanding of salvation, or what is involved in his conception of the scope of the divine action, the effect of this, and the nature of the human response. They can be seen for the most part as mutually complementary and expressing different and important aspects of what is involved and how it can best be articulated. But what is not always immediately obvious from them is Paul's profoundly *relational* sense of salvation. It is most evident with 'reconciliation', that is, the overcoming of the fragile nature of the human relationship with God, and the bringing together of those for whom normal relationships have seriously broken down. It is at least implied in the others, and is especially evident in the characteristic Pauline expression being 'in Christ' (as also the correlative theme of the Spirit dwelling in the believer), used to denote the new sphere of life that has now been entered into (Schweitzer 1931; Moule 1977). Finally, the importance of the *resurrection* for Paul's understanding of salvation should not be overlooked (Grayston 1990; Hooker 1994). It is of course the death of Christ that for Paul has final, salvific effect; but it is Christ's resurrection that is central and a prerequisite for his whole concept of salvation, and of the new way of life that this denotes.

The Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus), reflecting a development of Pauline tradition at least a generation beyond Paul's death, contain Pauline-sounding summaries of the salvation brought about through Christ (e.g. Tit. 3.4–7), and strong emphasis otherwise on salvation and final judgement (1 Tim. 1.14–15; 3.16; 2 Tim. 1.9–10; Tit. 2.14). Notably, both Jesus and God are specifically designated as Saviour (1 Tim. 4.10; Tit. 1.4), but statements otherwise about salvation are curious (or worse: 1 Tim. 2.15), and generally lack Paul's profound and urgent probing of the issues.

HEBREWS

Hebrews, like Paul, portrays Jesus' death as a saving event. In contrast to Paul, however, its terms of reference are strongly and consistently those of Jewish cult and sacrifice. More precisely, Hebrews draws an absolute contrast between what Jesus' death achieves and what the Jewish priesthood and sacrificial system fail to. Thus while Paul says that Jesus' death effects what the law could not do, Hebrews stresses, again and again, that what Jesus' death achieves perfectly, the priests and sacrifices could only ever do imperfectly (7.23–8; 9.6–14).

As far as salvation is concerned, Jesus' death is the perfect, final sacrifice that atones for sin fully, once and for all (7.27; 10.10, 12; Chester 1991; Lindars 1991a, 1991b). He is the eternal, perfect, unique and sinless High Priest, who has passed through the heavenly world and gives direct access to the presence of God (1.3; 4.14; 6.19–20; 8.1). All this stands in deliberate and stark contrast to the Jewish cult. There, the same sacrifices have constantly to be repeated, and are completely ineffectual and unable to deal with sin; the priests are human, impermanent, tainted by sin and limited to the earthly world (7.23; 9.6, 25; 10.1–4, 11). So Jesus' saving death renders the Jewish priestly and sacrificial system obsolete: it no longer has a place in providing salvation. One main reason for this absolute contrast, and harsh, negative judgement lies in the context for the writing of the letter. Those addressed – Jews who now formed a 'Christian' community – were apparently being tempted back to observance of Jewish cultic practice. Partly this was because they were faced with the problem of sins they had committed, and for which there seemed no means of atonement (10.27–8). They had cut themselves off, for example, from the provisions of the Day of Atonement, and now felt themselves drawn back to it, as also to other tangible forms of divine presence and forgiveness.

In the face of this, Hebrews draws its absolute contrast, and argues that Christ's sacrifice surpasses the limitations of the Jewish system of sacrifice and atonement. The Day of Atonement deals only with sins of ignorance; Jesus' death deals with all sins for all time (Gordon 1991). On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies only briefly; Jesus has entered it permanently (Lindars 1991b). Indeed, Christ's death achieves its full, saving power in the *heavenly* sanctuary, not in the earthly world.

It is important for Hebrews' argument that Christ belongs fully in the true, heavenly world and that the salvation his death brings is fully effective there. Yet along with this very elevated picture, Hebrews also stresses that Jesus voluntarily takes on himself human nature, weakness and a shameful form of death (2.14–18; 4.15). As with Philippians 2.5–11, so also Hebrews maintains that what makes Christ's saving activity truly distinctive is his stooping so low and sharing fully the human condition. Thus overall, while Paul has the most profound and prolific treatment of salvation in the whole of the New Testament, that in Hebrews is the most concentrated and powerfully intense.

1 PETER

Although it lacks a sustained argument, 1 Peter presents a constant stress on salvation throughout. There is strong emphasis especially on the death of Christ as central to salvation. The clearest and most vivid summary statement is provided in 3.18 and, in what it says, it stands very close to the main Pauline themes. That is, humans are in themselves unrighteous, but the death of Jesus, the righteous one, allows them access to God and enables them to be accepted by him, and so have new life in the Spirit (cf. Paul, e.g. Rom. 5.2). Similarly, 1.18–19 speaks of those it addresses as being 'ransomed . . . with the precious blood of Christ', which is reminiscent of both Paul and Hebrews, while the reference to 'sprinkling with his blood' (1.2) recalls Hebrews 9.13, 15–20 and, as there, sets salvation specifically in relation to the covenant.

References to Christ's suffering are frequent (e.g. 4.1: 'suffered in the flesh'), but the most outstanding aspect, as indeed of 1 Peter's whole portrayal of salvation, is the way Jesus is presented as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. This may be implicit in 1.19 ('a lamb without blemish or spot'), but is in any case made completely explicit in 2.21–5, with its virtual citation of Isaiah 53. Here Christ's wounds, suffering and death are given salvific value, on the pattern of the Suffering Servant.

It is notable as well that Christ's suffering is seen as an *example* for believers' suffering (2.21), and that the suffering of believers also appears to have a role in the schema of salvation. This emerges, for example, from 4.13–14, and again is close to what we have already seen in Paul. The necessity of suffering and prospect of persecution, both for individuals and also for the community, are strongly stressed throughout the letter, and have clear ethical implications. There is also a prominent eschatological emphasis, which is closely related to both suffering and salvation. Thus 4.7 is unequivocal about the imminent nature of the end, while 1.5–9 speaks of being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, but the *genuineness* of the faith is to be tested by fire, that is, the 'trials' of 1.6. The passage as a whole concludes (1.9): 'As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls.' Clearly this will be 'at the revelation of Jesus Christ', that is, at the end; but the obvious implication is that this depends on their faith withstanding the testing.

Thus salvation is, in an important sense, provisional. The final judgement is still awaited, and the result of this cannot be taken for granted. Faith is essential, but needs to be proved in the severe and final testing. So salvation is not something already fully assured. Much of this is close to what we find in Paul, although there appears in 1 Peter to be less assurance of salvation, and the concept of faith stands rather closer to that in Hebrews. Certainly 1 Peter is reminiscent of Paul in its stress on the need for holy living, obedience to the gospel and new life in the Spirit. In showing how God's saving act takes effect, however, 1 Peter uses the unusual metaphor of being born again, or born anew. This is found otherwise in the New Testament only in John 3. The way this 'rebirth' is expressed, in both 1.3 and 1.23, is vivid (and the latter especially has obvious affinities with Gnostic ideas). But in 1 Peter, a corollary of the being 'born anew' appears to be that they begin again as infants, and need careful tending and nourishment (e.g. 2.2). That is, salvation involves a process of maturing. Here 1 Peter goes beyond what we have found otherwise.

There is a further remarkable, indeed unique, aspect of 1 Peter's view of salvation. This is the idea (3.19–20; 4.6) that Christ went and preached to the formerly disobedient 'spirits in prison' and that 'the gospel was preached to the dead' (Reicke 1946; Dalton 1965). The idea, then, is that Christ descended to the underworld and proclaimed the gospel there; the idea of *descent*, at least, is found also in Ephesians 4.9. The point of this is to allow universal repentance and salvation; so at least it would appear from the reason given in 4.6 ('For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, that though judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God'). But if this is curious, still more so is the sequel in 3.20–1, the account of Christ's preaching to the departed, where baptism is apparently portrayed as a (or the?) means of salvation. The force of this is presumably that the purification that baptism entails and symbolizes is essential for salvation, and the implication

can of course be that it is baptism that gives rise to life in the Spirit. At any rate, the guarantee of salvation here, effectively, is not baptism but Christ's resurrection and heavenly authority.

The understanding of salvation in 1 Peter thus has much in common with what we find in Paul and Hebrews. Jesus' death represents God's supreme saving act. It has final, eschatological significance and all the urgency that this implies. Salvation is an act of God's mercy and grace. It effects a transfer from darkness to light, from a state of non-existence to a state of true existence. All this implies the need for pure and holy living, as the final events come to a climax and eschatological tribulation is endured. The final judgement is still in the future, and only in the light of that can salvation be secure. Along with these points held in common, however, several aspects of salvation in 1 Peter are altogether distinctive.

GOSPEL AND EPISTLES OF JOHN

In John's Gospel (Dodd 1953) Jesus is sent by God, in order to die and to save the world. He is himself a fully willing and conscious participant in this; his death is set as part of the divine plan from the beginning, and Jesus is completely in control of his part in this. He chooses to lay down his life (it cannot be taken from him until the right moment in the divine plan of salvation), and is in control of his own trial (7.30; 13.1; 19.11). His death is represented as a triumph, not a tragedy, and as the fulfilment of the divine plan (19.28, 30). The manner of his death, with blood and water flowing from him, symbolizes life and salvation (19.34). He speaks of himself being 'lifted up', in a deliberately double sense: being lifted up on the cross, to be put to death, and being lifted up in glory (3.14; 8.28; 12.32: there is indeed a third sense, which overlaps with this, of being lifted up in the resurrection). Hence, astoundingly, his death represents not only life and salvation, but the glory of God as well.

Jesus can therefore be spoken of as the Saviour of the World: he comes to save the world, not to judge it (3.17; 4.42). Nevertheless, judgement and condemnation are inexorably written into the equation. A sharp dualism hovers over the whole of the Gospel: between death and life, salvation and judgement (or condemnation), above and below, believers and the world (or the Jews), light and darkness. There is indeed a deep ambiguity about the world throughout the Gospel. Jesus has overcome the world, and this would seem to suggest that the world no longer exists as a hostile or alien force. At the same time, however, remaining in the world denotes condemnation. Thus Jesus is in himself the light of the world, the bread of life and the resurrection and the life, but it is only those who believe who share this light and life. The clear implication is that the world outside the community stands in darkness and condemnation (3.36). 'Life' in John is interpreted as 'eternal life' and this becomes the supreme designation in this Gospel for salvation. It is what the Gospel otherwise speaks of as 'life to the very full' (10.10). Both the Father and the Son 'give life', but again it is necessary to believe or be 'born anew' (3.3) in order to share in this. Jesus dies for the 'whole people', just as he comes to save 'the world', but again the potentially universal scope of this is sharply limited by the terms the Gospel uses to demarcate the different categories it speaks of.

The fate of the individual has already been decided by the response that has been made to Jesus. The final judgement, and the eschatological battle and triumph over evil, are only briefly alluded to. Each individual has already settled the decisive issue, and their final destiny, for themselves. The resurrection life, as also the state of condemnation, has already been anticipated (and it is the Paraclete, or Spirit, who now mediates this life, and the presence of Jesus). It is in the end knowledge of Jesus that brings life. This is not an esoteric saving knowledge, as in Gnostic systems, though these can obviously represent an easy and early development from this Johannine tradition.

There is substantial affinity between the Gospel and what we find in the Epistles (especially 1 John). Here it is said that God sent his only Son into the world, to give eternal life (4.9). Jesus lays down his own life (3.16). To abide in Jesus, and to *know* him, is to have life, which means *eternal* life; not to know him means not to have this (2.3–6, 24–5). Again there is a stark contrast drawn. Along with these themes, however, there are also others. Jesus is sent to be the expiation (or propitiation) for sin (4.10). He is just and faithful, and acts as advocate in the heavenly world, so that those who belong to him can have confidence in the final judgement (2.1). Jesus' death purifies and cleanses from sin (1.7). There is, however, no automatic state of perfection for believers, and the writer stresses the need for repentance and forgiveness (1.9). Specifically, there is the repeated demand for them to keep the commandments of Jesus. Above all, this means the commandment of love (2.7–8; 3.11). Jesus' death is portrayed as an expression of God's love, and it should result in an expression of reciprocal love between members of the community (4.11). The salvation, or eternal life, Jesus brings, thus has a much more emphatically ethical dimension here than it does in the Gospel.

REVELATION

The most striking aspect of Revelation is its portrayal of Jesus as the Lamb who has been slain (5.6–12; 13.8; cf. John 1.29). Thus it presents Jesus as the Passover Lamb (as well as Suffering Servant), who brings redemption and liberation in the new Exodus (15.2–4). Yet he is also the Davidic Messiah (5.5; 22.16), who has won the decisive victory, in the eschatological battle, against all the forces of evil, political as well as spiritual (11.15–18; 16.14–16; Schüssler Fiorenza 1985; Bauckham 1993). His victory, however, has been brought about not by military might but through his sacrificial death (5.6–14; 12.11). The victory over evil powers (including Rome) is final, but has still to be brought to completion, and the chosen, who already belong to the Lamb, have a vital part to play in this. Just as Jesus conquered by his death, as a faithful witness or martyr (3.14), so do they (6.9–11; 7.4–14; 12.11). Their martyrdom has potentially universal effect, in bringing about the faith and repentance of all nations (11.1–13; 14.14–20; 15.3–4), and thus in establishing God's kingdom on earth (11.15; 12.10). Judgement still poses a threat for those outside the elect (*chs 15–19*), but the positive fulfilment of God's purpose, and of the Lamb's sacrificial death and witness, will finally be found in the consummation of this kingdom. Thus the work comes to its climax with the superb portrayal of the new Jerusalem, new heaven and new earth that will appear at Christ's Parousia

(21.1 – 22.5). Revelation makes passing reference to salvation from sin (1.5), but the book as a whole is characterized above all by a focus on the deliverance and reward already assured for the faithful community, and by the most powerful vision in the whole of the New Testament of a world that is redeemed and restored.

CONCLUSION

From all of this, it is clear that there is no single view of salvation in earliest Christianity. There are real differences in conception as well as expression. The Pauline version is in many respects the most profound and powerful, and has become overwhelmingly predominant. It is worth remembering, however, that there are other accounts of salvation within the New Testament, some highly distinctive and original, others quite discordant. Thus James has nothing of the death of Christ, and justification is by works, not faith alone (2.14–26). Nevertheless, the main thrust in most of the New Testament is deliverance from sin and death and liberation from evil and oppressive forces, and being brought into a new sphere of existence and a new relationship with God. It is the death of Christ that is central throughout, as that which effects salvation and inaugurates the new age that the believer now belongs to. In all the varied tradition of the New Testament, however, it is not only Christ's death but also his resurrection that belong together at the heart of the Christian understanding of salvation. It is Christ's resurrection that marks the defeat of death and opens up the possibility of new life. Salvation, that is, effects a transfer from a state of death to a state of life, from being in darkness to living in the light, from the old age to the new age. These categories are set in completely contrasting, polarized terms because the new age that has been brought about is also the final age. It is therefore urgent and essential, in the face of the final judgement that is about to come, to be found in the true community of those who are saved, and to live a transformed life. The concept of being saved belongs to an overriding eschatological perspective. The death of Christ is seen throughout to have final effect, and salvation is set at the centre of Christian proclamation and Christian theology from the very start.

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CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE IDENTITY AND ROLE OF JESUS



Catrin H. Williams

It is something of a commonplace in studies of New Testament interpretations of Jesus ('New Testament christology') to draw attention to a question that, according to Gospel traditions, Jesus posed to his disciples: 'Who do people say that I am?' (Mark 8:27; cf. Matt. 16:13; Luke 9:18). They report that people view him as John the Baptist, Elijah or as one of the prophets, while the disciples' own evaluation of Jesus is expressed by Peter: 'You are the Christ' (Mark 8:29). It is the variety rather than the content of the responses offered in this scene that merits attention at this point, because it serves as an illustration of the diverse ways in which the New Testament writers sought to express their understanding of the identity and role of Jesus. Before examining the christological beliefs attested in individual New Testament texts, some attempts at delineating the origins and early development of christology will be considered.

MAPPING OUT EARLY CHRISTOLOGY

The study of New Testament christology during the early decades of the twentieth century was dominated by scholars belonging to 'the history-of-religions school', who argued that many early Christian beliefs and practices were drawn from ideas current in the cultural environment of the Graeco-Roman world. In an influential study entitled *Kyrios Christos* (1913) Wilhelm Bousset offered a historical sketch of the development of early christology, giving particular attention to the period between Jesus and Paul. The beliefs of the Palestinian community in the earliest post-Easter period centred on the confession of Jesus as the 'Son of Man' whose imminent return (*parousia*) as heavenly Messiah was eagerly awaited. A decisive turning point occurred when Christianity entered the Gentile communities of Antioch, Tarsus and Damascus. The eschatological hope characteristic of the congregations in Judaea was now replaced by the cultic veneration of Jesus as the exalted Lord present with the community in worship and sacrament. The title 'Lord' (*kyrios*) was first applied to Jesus by Gentile believers, and arose as a result of its use to address pagan deities in Syria and Egypt, as well as Roman emperors in the ruler-cult – a development viewed by Bousset as inconceivable within the monotheistic environment of the Jewish-Christian communities. Paul was deeply influenced by these Gentile

churches, and he also developed their beliefs by depicting Christ as a living presence with whom believers enjoyed a mystical relationship.

The impact of Bousset's study on subsequent scholarship cannot be overestimated. It was particularly well received by later proponents of the history-of-religions school, and Rudolf Bultmann commented in the foreword to the fifth edition of *Kyrios Christos* that he viewed it as an indispensable work. Bultmann also developed his own hypotheses with regard to the origins of christology, and argued that the historical Jesus did not claim any titles for himself; nor did he possess what could be termed a messianic self-consciousness (1952, 1: 26–32). Thus the legacy of Bousset and his successors was their assessment of New Testament christology as the product of distinct early Christian communities that did not stand in any real continuity with the self-understanding of Jesus.

Others have argued that the foundations of christology were already laid down in the activity and proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth. Oscar Cullmann, for example, rejected the notion that New Testament christology developed simply by conforming to a conceptual scheme provided by ancient Judaism or Hellenism, since Jesus' self-understanding and the impact of his person and ministry must also be considered (1963: 5). C. F. D. Moule has argued, moreover, that early christological conceptions should not be viewed as the result of an evolutionary process, which implies an ever-increasing distance from Jesus and the introduction of alien factors in response to different cultural environments, but rather as an organic development, in that 'successive descriptions and evaluations of Jesus constituted only new insights into what was there from the beginning' (1977: 22).

Attempts at determining the relationship between the claims of the historical Jesus and the early Christian beliefs about him can be outlined according to the categories of explicit, implicit and evoked christology (Theissen and Merz 1998: 520–553). It is difficult to ascertain whether Jesus embraced an explicit christology by laying claim to one or more titles (a consensus is emerging among scholars that he used the obscure expression 'Son of Man' as a self-designation, though not necessarily as a title). An implicit christology may, nevertheless, be detected in Jesus' consciousness of eschatological authority (his statements introduced by 'Amen', 'but I say to you' or 'I have come'), as well as special intimacy with God in his use of the Aramaic address 'Abba' (Mark 14:36). Jesus' claims relating to the forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:5–11) and his healings and exorcisms also point to a consciousness of his role as one whose words and activity signify the coming of the kingdom of God. In addition, an *evoked christology* denotes expectations that Jesus aroused among people during his lifetime. According to several Gospel traditions, titles drawn from traditional Jewish categories (such as 'Messiah' and 'Son of David') were attached to Jesus by his disciples and followers (Mark 8:29; 10:47–8) and are reflected in the charge that led to his execution as a messianic pretender (Mark 15:2, 26, 32). Such factors imply that the issue of Jesus' messianic identity was already raised during his ministry, while his own response is described as one of reticence rather than outright rejection (Mark 8:30; Matt. 26:64). Even without explicitly claiming the title 'Messiah', the ministry and self-understanding of Jesus could be termed 'messianic' in view of the eschatological character of his proclamation of the kingdom of God, which in turn led to further reflection among his followers after Easter.

What was the nature of christological reflection during the decisive period between Jesus' death (about 30 CE) and the emergence of the earliest New Testament writing, probably Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (50 CE)? Because Bousset's outline of two largely unconnected stages of development makes no allowances for probable lines of communication between Jewish-Palestinian-Christian and Gentile-Christian communities, his scheme has been refined to accommodate an intervening stage or pattern described as Hellenistic-Jewish Christianity (Hahn 1969; Fuller 1965). Within the context of a Greek-speaking Hellenistic-Jewish church deeply influenced by the Greek Bible (LXX) and Hellenistic ideas, the eschatological expectation of Jesus' return as 'Son of Man' gave way for the first time to reflection on the heavenly exaltation and divine lordship of the risen Christ. The titles 'Lord' and 'Son of God' were then transformed by Hellenistic-Gentile Christians into expressions of Jesus' status as a pre-existent divine being who became incarnate. Hahn and Fuller stress that this three-stage classification should not be linked too rigidly to specific chronological periods or geographical locations, although the three types of community do correspond, in broad terms, to a movement from Palestine to the Jewish Diaspora to the Gentile world, and from a 'lower' to a 'higher' christology.

The notion of christological development in three stages can certainly allow for some degree of overlap between, and fluidity within, the early Christian communities, but it raises fundamental questions about the nature of the early Church during the obscure years between Jesus and Paul. The nature of the available New Testament evidence means that attempts at reconstructing distinct developments in early christology is dependent on identifying key traditions in texts that evidently belong to a later period. It has also been asked whether the rapid development of christology during the years up to the time of Paul's earliest known letter can really accommodate three different stages, and whether one can speak of a purely Gentile form of Christianity in the period before Paul's mission (Hengel 1983). It is probable that virtually all the missionaries who founded communities in cities like Antioch and Damascus were Jewish Christians, and their preaching would have included Jewish-Christian concepts as well as (Gentile) elements familiar to their new audiences. There are problems also with the proposed distinction between Palestinian-Jewish Christianity and Hellenistic-Jewish Christianity in terms of their geographical and chronological origin, for it has been conclusively demonstrated that Jewish Palestine had for a long time been subjected to Hellenistic influence in a variety of ways (Hengel 1989).

Attention is also paid to what many view as a historically reliable tradition in Acts 6:1 about the presence of 'Hebrews' and 'Hellenists' in the Jerusalem church (Hengel 1983; Marshall 1990). The term 'Hellenists' is interpreted as denoting Greek-speaking Jewish Christians from the Diaspora who now resided in Jerusalem and, from an early date, had formed a community alongside the Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians ('Hebrews'). Hengel proposes that these Greek-speaking Jewish Christians played a decisive role in the shaping of beliefs about Jesus, and that their missionary activities led to the formation of Christian communities in such important places as Caesarea, Antioch and Damascus (1983: 40–7). They believed that Jesus, the crucified Messiah, would soon return, but they also interpreted his present status in terms of the exaltation of the Son of Man. In this respect the

interpretation of Scripture played a significant role in early Jewish-Christian reflection on the titles and functions of the risen Christ, including his Sonship (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7), his exaltation as Son of Man (Ps. 8) and his enthronement as Lord at the right hand of God (Ps. 110:1).

Christological reflection on Psalm 110:1, whose Greek version in the LXX includes two occurrences of the designation *kyrios* ('The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand . . .)'), also suggests that the use of the title *kyrios* for Jesus is not necessarily to be derived from the influence of pagan cults, but can be traced back to Greek-speaking Jewish Christians. The likelihood that this title was applied to Jesus at an early stage, among members of the Palestinian community, is further strengthened by examples of the title '[the] Lord' as a divine designation in first-century Jewish Palestine. In addition to the use of *kyrios* as a title for God among Greek-speaking Jews (Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:68; 20:90), evidence for its Aramaic counterpart *marê* has been uncovered in some Qumran texts (Fitzmyer 1979: 124–5). It is thus conceivable that Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians in the Jerusalem church applied the title *marê* to Jesus in its role as a divine designation, which was then translated as *kyrios* for or by the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians. The use of *marê*, though not in its absolute form, also accounts for the distinctive liturgical formula *maranatha* cited by Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:22. Indeed, the fact that this untranslated Aramaic phrase is preserved in a text written in Greek suggests that it originated among members of the Palestinian community, where it served as an eschatological petition for the return of Jesus ('Our Lord, come'), probably within the liturgical context of the eucharistic meal (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26). Both the *maranatha* invocation and the christological appropriation of Psalm 110:1 therefore offer glimpses of significant developments already established by Aramaic- and Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, for to call Jesus 'Lord' was to confer upon him a title with clear divine connotations.

The distinctive use of *maranatha* in 1 Corinthians 16:22 clearly raises important questions about the relationship between the development of christology and the liturgical practices of the early Christians (Hurtado 1998). Devotional practices viewed as indicative of what is described as Christ-devotion (Hurtado) or a cult of Christ (Horbury 1998) also include the singing of hymns in honour and celebration of Christ (1 Cor. 14:26), baptizing in his name or 'into Christ Jesus' (Rom. 6:3; Acts 2:38) and confessing that 'Jesus is Lord' (Rom. 10:9–13; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11). Because these elements are attested in the earliest New Testament writings, the letters of Paul, it has been proposed that a number of devotional practices (as in the case of *maranatha*) could have originated at an earlier stage among Jewish Christians. Not only is it widely agreed that Paul cites already existing formulae in his letters (for example, Rom. 1:3–4; 1 Cor. 15:3–5), but it is also noted that there are no indications in Paul's letters that his views about Christ were unique to him or indeed conflicted with those of other Jewish Christians; his disagreements with the Jerusalem church centred on his mission to the Gentiles (Hengel 1983: 44; Hurtado 1999: 52–4). The liturgical practices reflected in Paul's letters, including the acclamation of Jesus as 'Lord', have therefore been cited as evidence that the exalted Christ became an object of cultic devotion alongside God in early Christian communities. What is noted as striking, in this respect, is that the Jewish Christians

did not regard their Christ-devotion as a threat to the uniqueness of God, but as an affirmation of his glory and sovereignty (cf. Phil. 2:11). The accommodation of the exalted Christ into the worship of the one God attests 'the use of monotheistic language as a christological category' (Rainbow 1991: 84), finding its clearest expression in 1 Corinthians 8:6: 'Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.' In other words, Jewish Christians like Paul viewed themselves as loyal to the Jewish monotheistic faith in their worship of 'one God', but their conviction that the crucified Jesus had been exalted to heavenly glory led to the veneration of Christ as 'one Lord'.

The central chapters of Hurtado's important study examine the ways in which ancient Judaism provided a conceptual framework, broadly labelled as 'divine agency', which enabled Jewish Christians to explain the exaltation of Jesus to God's right hand without compromising their commitment to the one God. A number of Jewish texts, from Palestine and the Diaspora, depict God as appointing a particular figure to act as his chief agent (Hurtado 1998: 17–92; also Davis 1994). The category of divine agency manifests itself in various forms, since a chief agent can be a divine attribute (Wisdom or the Logos), an exalted patriarch (Moses or Enoch) or a principal angel like Michael (Dan. 10:13–21), Yahoel (*Apocalypse of Abraham* 10–11) or Melchizedek (in a fragmentary Qumran text known as 11QMelchizedek). The nature of the role exercised by God's principal agent also varies, for Wisdom is depicted as participating in creation (Wisdom 7:22), Melchizedek as active in eschatological redemption, while Michael and Yahoel exercise power in their role as the grand vizier of God. The chief agent is therefore portrayed in these Jewish texts as having a highly exalted and unique status, second only to God in terms of authority and significance. In some cases, the chief agent possesses special divine attributes and powers, as in the depiction of Yahoel as one who bears the Divine Name (cf. Exod. 23:21) and whose appearance is described in language reminiscent of theophanies (*Apocalypse of Abraham* 10:3, 8; 11:2–3).

None of these chief agent traditions, according to Hurtado, compromises Jewish monotheism. Wisdom and the Logos are metaphorical descriptions of God's active involvement in the world rather than semi-independent beings or hypostases (1998: 36–7, 46–8; also Dunn 1989: 163–76, 213–30), whereas depictions of the exalted status of patriarchs like Moses are intended to validate Jewish religious tradition and foreshadow the reward of the elect ones. Even principal angels remain distinct from, and subordinate to, God, since their authority and status are derived from the one whose majesty they serve to magnify. Above all, Hurtado emphasizes that, although the honour accorded to these figures may have included such phenomena as the application of venerative language to angels (Stuckenbruck 1995), there is no convincing evidence that any of them became the object of formal corporate worship in a Jewish cultic context.

Since 'in the exclusive monotheism of the Jewish religious tradition . . . it was worship which was the real test of monotheistic faith in religious practice' (Bauckham 1993b: 118), Hurtado claims that the inclusion of the risen Christ with God as the recipient of cultic veneration produced an innovation or 'mutation' of Jewish monotheism, unparalleled in Jewish traditions of God's chief agent. In other words,

monotheistic piety was redefined in order to accommodate a binitarian devotion to Jesus alongside God. This modification is viewed by Hurtado as resulting primarily from the post-Easter religious experiences of the early Christians (1998: 117–22), especially their visionary experiences of the risen Christ as exalted and participating fully in the glory and power of God (cf. Acts 7:55–6; 2 Cor. 3:16–18).

Two quite different assessments of the material examined by Hurtado can be noted. First, his view that Christ-devotion marked a significant development in relation to Jewish monotheism is shared by others (Dunn 1989; Casey 1991), although they contend that truly binitarian patterns of belief in the divinity or incarnation of Jesus only occurred during the last decades of the first century CE (particularly in John's Gospel). Secondly, others argue that there are Jewish precedents for the binitarian elements in early christology, in that several of the traditions about principal angels demonstrate that ancient Jewish monotheism could accommodate a second divine being alongside God (Rowland 1982; Fossum 1985). Rowland argues that there is evidence in certain Jewish texts of a separation of divinity involving God and his personified glory, with the latter acting as a quasi-angelic mediator (Ezek. 1:26–8; 8:2–4; Dan. 10:5–9), as also attested and further developed in the description of Yahoel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (1982: 94–113). The depiction of Yahoel in this text as one who bears the Divine Name (10:3, 8) is interpreted by Fossum as indicating that a principal angel could be regarded as the personification of the Name, thus sharing God's nature or mode of being (1985: 318–20), whereas according to Hurtado the Name is rather the medium of his power. What becomes apparent from these different assessments of principal angel traditions is that there is clear disagreement as to whether the exalted status attributed to such figures as Yahoel should be understood in functional terms alone or points to a belief in their divine nature.

Hurtado's proposal that the visionary experiences of the early Christians were the major impetus for their cultic veneration of Jesus requires a degree of caution due to the nature of the New Testament evidence. It is a particularly difficult task to determine the relationship between subsequent reflections on such experiences, as in Paul's claim to have seen the risen Lord (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; cf. Gal. 1:15–16), and the actual content and nature of those experiences. Moreover, it is debated whether one can speak of visionary experiences of the risen Christ as actually generating christological convictions (for example, Christ as a heavenly divine figure) or should view these experiences as having been shaped by already existing categories provided, in particular, by Jewish traditions and patterns of belief. William Horbury has recently proposed that the worship of Christ in fact finds its origins in Jewish messianism (1998: 127–40): it was the recognition and praise of Jesus as messianic king, beginning during his ministry and developed in the early Christian communities, that led to the acclamations, hymns and titles offered to Christ and are preserved in the writings of the New Testament.

The debate among scholars on the origins of New Testament christology continues to be vigorous and illuminating. The publication of important sources, particularly the Dead Sea Scrolls, has led to a much clearer understanding of the diversity in ancient Judaism and to a greater appreciation of the importance of intermediary figures in Jewish traditions. And although it is difficult to offer a detailed picture

of the development of christology during this early period, recent scholarship has made a decisive contribution to our understanding of the earliest Christian beliefs about Jesus as well as the factors that helped to shape them. Strong arguments have been offered in several studies for viewing the devotion to Christ as a divine figure alongside God as a characteristic of the devotional practices of early Jewish Christians rather than as a later innovation attributable to Gentile believers. This was, moreover, a period marked by deep christological reflection on the Scriptures, thus enabling early Christians to express their conviction that the crucified and risen Christ had been exalted as Lord to a heavenly position at the right hand of God. These were the foundations upon which the authors of the individual writings in the New Testament developed their own interpretations of the identity and role of Jesus.

INTERPRETATIONS OF JESUS IN NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

Until recently the study of New Testament christology has largely been approached through an analysis of individual titles applied to Jesus, giving particular attention to their conceptual background and usage. The limitations of this procedure are now widely recognized (see Keck 1986: 368–70). This approach not only tends to isolate the christological titles from their context, particularly their narrative contexts in the case of the Gospels, but it can overlook other, equally significant, christological passages. This is not to deny that the New Testament authors sought to interpret Jesus in the light of already existing titles or expressions, but this is only one of many forms of christological expression adopted in the writings. A selection of New Testament texts exhibiting various emphases and a wide range of interpretations of Jesus will therefore now be examined.

The letters of Paul

Paul expresses his understanding of Jesus Christ in seven letters generally acknowledged to have been written by him between 50 and about 60 CE (1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans and Philemon). Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians and the Pastoral letters are certainly post-Pauline compositions, but the stronger case for the Pauline authorship of Colossians justifies its inclusion for consideration with the seven undisputed letters. Nearly every passage in Paul's writings discloses one aspect or other of his views about Christ, but his letters were not written for the purpose of offering a systematized discussion of christology. In each case Paul is responding to specific situations arising in individual communities, and his presentation of christological themes can take forms and include emphases relevant to the circumstances of those whom he addresses. For example, Paul's extended discussion of his conviction that the risen Christ will return (1 Thess. 4:13–5:11) arises from the concern voiced by members of the community at Thessalonica about the fate of those who had already died before the *parousia*. But while due regard must be given to the context and concerns reflected in each letter, there is also an underlying consistency in Paul's expressions of his christological convictions.

What may appear remarkable is that Paul offers very few indications in his letters of the extent of his knowledge about Jesus of Nazareth. Limited references to the earthly life of Jesus include declarations about his birth of a woman under the Jewish law (Gal. 4:4) and his descent from the line of David (Rom. 1:3). The paucity of such statements should not, however, be interpreted as implying that Paul displays no interest in the events of Jesus' life and ministry. The citation of formulaic traditions (cf. Rom. 1:3–4), together with several subtle allusions to the teaching of Jesus (cf. Rom. 12:14; 13:7–10; 1 Cor. 7:10–11; 11:23–5), suggest that Paul takes for granted that the recipients of his letters are already familiar with traditions about Jesus due to the earlier preaching activity carried out in their midst by Paul or other early Christian missionaries.

The central events for Paul are the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, as demonstrated when he appeals to the tradition he has received and handed on to the Corinthians: 'that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3–4). The salvific death and resurrection of Jesus are presented here as the core of the Christian message, as Paul himself had experienced when the risen Christ 'last of all . . . appeared also to me' (15:8). Thus, on the few occasions that Paul does make explicit reference to his own call or conversion, he emphasizes that this was due to a revelation of the risen Lord (Gal. 1:12, 15–16). This christophany experience resulted in a decisive shift in Paul's understanding of the significance of Jesus; it was an event that led him to accept the claim of the first believers that the crucified Christ had been raised from the dead, and it was an experience that, according to several scholars, brought about many key aspects of Paul's christology (Kim 1984; Longenecker 1997).

The centrality of Jesus' death and resurrection in the gospel preached by Paul also means that his reflections on christology and on the salvific effects of the Christ-event are closely intertwined in his letters. This is particularly apparent in two passages where Paul sets up an explicit contrast between Christ and Adam, understood as representative figures of humankind from creation to death (Adam) and of eschatological humankind from death to life (Christ) (see Dunn 1998: 241). In Romans 5:12–21 the disobedience of Adam, which resulted in death and condemnation for all, is contrasted with the obedience of Christ, resulting in grace and the gift of righteousness (5:17–18). In an earlier letter (1 Cor. 15:20–2, 45–9) Paul's interest in the Adam/Christ motif centres on the resurrection of Jesus as the beginning (15:20: 'the first fruits') of those who have died. All who are 'in Adam' die, but those who are 'in Christ' shall be made alive (15:21–2). This line of argumentation is resumed in 15:45–9, and Christ is now described as 'the last Adam' who has become a life-giving spirit; he is the beginning of a new humanity and his image will be borne by those who belong to him.

It is true that a study of the titles used by an author like Paul cannot provide a comprehensive picture of his views about Jesus, but the importance he attaches to Jesus' identity as 'Messiah (Christ)', 'Son of God' and 'Lord' certainly calls for comment. It is interesting that Paul uses the designation 'Christ' more as a second name for Jesus ('Jesus Christ' or 'Christ Jesus') than as a title. This apparent lack of attention to the fulfilment of messianic hopes in Jesus results from the fact that

christos as a title would have little meaning for Gentile readers, because to them it was a word that simply meant ‘anointed or smeared with oil’. The titular use of *christos* to describe Jesus as the promised Messiah does occur in a few passages, especially Romans 9:3–5 where Paul describes the privileges received by the Jews from whom the Messiah comes.

Particularly significant are those rarer occasions where Paul speaks of Jesus as ‘Son of God’ (Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:19; Gal. 2:20) or ‘Son’ (Rom. 8:3, 29; 1 Cor. 1:9; Gal. 4:4), even describing Jesus’ divine sonship as the content of the gospel (cf. Gal. 1:15–16). These declarations are more likely to have been influenced by ancient Jewish traditions than pagan religious concepts, particularly as sonship terminology occurs frequently in the Scriptures to denote Israel (Exod. 4:22; Hos. 11:1), the Davidic king (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7) and, in some Qumran texts, the Davidic Messiah (4QFlorilegium 1:10–13). Assessing the Pauline evidence against a Jewish background therefore leads Hurtado to propose, ‘Paul did not employ the language of divine sonship primarily to claim that Jesus was divine. Essentially Paul’s references to Jesus as God’s “Son” communicate Jesus’ unique status and intimate relationship to God. But the contexts of these references supply several additional and more particular nuances to the term’ (Hurtado 1993: 900). The actual context of the Pauline sonship language is important in such cases as the kerygmatic formula cited by Paul in Romans 1:3–4, a formula with which his readers were probably already acquainted: ‘the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, and was appointed (NRSV: declared) to be Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord’. In this two-part declaration Jesus’ earthly status as ‘Son of David’ is juxtaposed with his installation as ‘Son of God’ in power by virtue of his resurrection. Scholars have long pondered whether the [second part](#) declares that divine sonship was first conferred upon Jesus at his resurrection, leading some to propose that Paul added the words ‘in power’ in order to tone down its ‘adoptionist’ ring (Barrett 1962: 20). The role of this formulaic tradition as a twofold affirmation of Jesus’ divine sonship, with probable echoes of Davidic traditions (2 Sam. 7:12–14; see Hengel 1976: 62), is confirmed by the way Paul prefaces the whole citation with the clause ‘the gospel concerning his Son’. Another declaration in the same letter stresses that Jesus’ sonship expresses his unique relationship with God, for Jesus’ salvific death is described in terms of God not withholding his own Son ‘but gave him up for all of us’ (8:32; cf. 5:10; Gal. 2:20; 4:4–5).

It is the title ‘Lord’ that receives most prominence in the Pauline writings. To speak of the risen Christ in terms of lordship is to define his relationship with all believers, and so Paul stresses that the central confession of their faith is that ‘Jesus is Lord’ (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3). Paul displays awareness of the use of *kyrios* as a designation for the ‘many lords’ honoured in pagan cults (1 Cor. 8:5), but he probably inherited this title from Jewish Christians, as indicated above. Paul uses the title *kyrios* for God in several scriptural citations (for example, Rom. 4:8; 1 Cor. 3:20), but in other places he applies *kyrios*-texts to Christ himself. One of the most striking examples occurs in Romans 10:9–13, for the confession of Jesus as Lord leads to the declaration, ‘The same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”’

(Joel 2:32). Similarly in the [second part](#) of Philippians 2:6–11, one of the best-known New Testament christological passages, the exaltation of Jesus is described in the loftiest of terms: God has greatly exalted him and bestowed upon him the name above every name, so that every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The universal acclamation that ‘Jesus is Lord’ means that the exalted Christ is proclaimed worthy of the honour usually reserved for God, whereas the name given to him is probably God’s own name (*kyrios*–YHWH) since the scriptural passage cited in 2:10 refers to God in its original context (Isa. 45:23; cf. Rom. 14:11).

This distinctive appropriation to Jesus of a text like Isaiah 45:23, which contains one of the most unequivocal declarations of monotheism in the Hebrew Scriptures, signifies that Paul directly, and quite boldly, associates Christ with God. Depicting Jesus in such exalted terms does not, however, conflict with the emphasis in Philippians 2:9–11 on the sovereignty of God, for the bestowal of the Name indicates a unique status conferred upon the exalted Christ by God himself (2:9), while those who confess Jesus as ‘Lord’ do so to the glory of the Father. The inclusion of Christ in expressions of commitment to the one God is graphically attested in 1 Corinthians 8:6, viewed by many commentators as an adaptation of the *Shema*, the traditional monotheistic formula recited daily by the Jews (Deut. 6:4: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord’). Emphasis on ‘one God, the Father’ is combined with a confession of the uniqueness of Christ’s lordship, for there is ‘one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist’ (1 Cor. 8:6). Once again, to describe Jesus as ‘one Lord’ is not viewed by Paul as impinging on his belief in the one true God. ‘All things are *from*, that is originating in, deriving out of, the Father, but *through* the Son, that is by his agency’ (Ziesler 1990: 35).

If Paul can speak of Christ in such exalted terms, even as the mediator of creation, does he envisage that Christ also existed before his earthly manifestation? There is vigorous debate over this issue, particularly as statements about God having sent his Son (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3) could imply a sending from another mode of existence or, alternatively, a commissioning reminiscent of the sending of the prophets. Scholars are primarily interested in a cluster of passages where epithets and functions traditionally associated with divine Wisdom are now applied to Christ. His depiction as ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col. 1:15) echoes the description of Wisdom as ‘the image of his goodness’ (Wisdom 7:26), whereas declarations attributing to Christ a role in creation (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16) also possess analogies in ancient Jewish reflection on Wisdom as instrumental with God in the work of creation (cf. Prov. 8:30; Wisdom 7:22). What are the christological implications of such associations? Dunn argues that they point to a Pauline conception of Christ’s pre-existence in ideal rather than personal terms, particularly as Jewish Wisdom traditions seek, with the aid of metaphorical language, to bridge the gap between the transcendent God and his immanent activity in the world. When Paul drew upon these traditions, his claim was that pre-existent Wisdom – God’s creative plan and power – is now revealed and realized in Jesus (1998: 267–77). But even if Jewish traditions do present Wisdom as a personification of God’s activity rather than as a personal figure, it does not necessarily follow that Paul’s attribution of the functions and epithets of Wisdom to Christ amounts to an unmodified transference of a fixed

or readymade model (see Schüssler Fiorenza 1975). Indeed, it is made clear in the relevant Pauline passages that their subject is not a divine attribute or function, but the concrete historical figure whose personal relationship with God is highlighted by his naming as 'Lord, Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 8:6) and 'Son' (Col. 1:13).

Even more decisive is the opening line of the poetic passage in Philippians 2:6–11, where Christ Jesus is depicted as existing 'in the form of God'. The opinion of most scholars is that this declaration expresses Christ's divine and sovereign status before his earthly existence; he did not count his equality with God as something he could use to his own advantage (*harpagmos*), but rather, by becoming human and assuming the status of a slave, he humbled himself and was obedient unto death (2:6–8). Again, Dunn seeks to demonstrate that this passage does not attribute pre-existence to Christ, but establishes an implied contrast between Adam and Jesus (1989: 114–21; 1998: 281–8). During his earthly life Christ, like Adam, bore the image of God (Gen. 1:27), but, different from Adam, he was obedient and did not seek to snatch equality with God (Gen. 3:5; with a different interpretation of *harpagmos*). The earthly Adam failed in his quest to be like God, but Christ embraced the fate of humankind by accepting death (the consequence of Adam's disobedience) and was consequently exalted (cf. Ps. 8:6). Those who favour the traditionally accepted interpretation contend, however, that the language of the first half of this passage is most naturally read as one of movement from Christ's pre-incarnate state to his human existence and death (2:6–8), and not of Jesus' earthly life and death as a two-stage contrast with Adam's state before and after his choice in the garden. Possibly more problematic for Dunn's interpretation is the lack of clear Adamic allusions in Philippians 2:6–11, and his view that 'form' (*morphē* in 2:6) is interchangeable with 'image' (*eikōn* – Gen. 1:27: LXX) does not adequately account for the repetition of the word in 2:7 where it cannot refer to image ('taking the form of a servant').

What must be acknowledged when attempting to determine whether Paul believed in the heavenly pre-existence of Christ is that he never seeks to explain or discuss at any length the nature of this pre-existent state. Indeed, to enquire about the precise nature of Christ's role as the one 'through whom are all things' (1 Cor. 8:6) or his ontological status 'in the form of God' (Phil. 2:6) and as 'Son' (Gal. 4:4) is to seek answers from Paul to questions that characterized the christological controversies of later centuries.

The Gospel of Mark

The Gospel of Mark, the earliest of the four canonical Gospels, was written during the turbulent years leading up to, or possibly shortly after, the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. At least fifteen years therefore separate the later undisputed letters of Paul from the first Gospel account of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection. The importance of Mark's role as a compiler or editor of existing traditions about Jesus is indisputable, but the distinctive character of his christology becomes evident in the way he shapes and structures his material. Recurrent themes and motifs can certainly be detected, and declarations or episodes of particular christological import are strategically placed at key points in the narrative. The significance of the introductory declaration about 'the gospel of Jesus Christ (or the Messiah), the Son of

God' (1:1) is in fact disclosed in events located at the beginning, middle and end of the Gospel (1:11; 8:29; 9:7; 14:61–2; 15:39, although it should be noted that some important textual witnesses do not include the title 'Son of God' in 1:1). The unfolding of Jesus' identity through the flow of the narrative, especially in Jesus' responses to the way others view him, leads to the description of Mark's christology as a 'narrative christology' (Tannehill 1979; Matera 1999: 5–26).

The first major section of Mark's Gospel describes Jesus' public ministry in Galilee (1:16–8:26). His declaration that 'the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand' (1:15) finds confirmation in his activity as authoritative teacher (cf. 1:21; 6:2), powerful healer (5:25–43; 7:31–7) and exorcist (1:23–7; 5:1–20). People marvel at Jesus' authority and power, but they only gain a partial understanding of his identity and mission. Even the disciples, to whom has been revealed the mystery of the kingdom of God (4:11), fail to grasp his true significance. Their response, after Jesus stills the storm, is to ask, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?' (4:41), and, despite the feeding of the multitude and the epiphanic character of Jesus' act of walking on the sea, the disciples are rebuked for their lack of faith (8:17–21; cf. 6:52). Jesus' unique status is, nevertheless, recognized by the demons, whose acclamation that he is the 'Son of God' (3:11; cf. 1:24; 5:7) echoes the baptism scene where Jesus alone hears the divine voice declare, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased' (1:11, with words drawn from Ps. 2:7 and Isa. 42:1). But the demons' open acknowledgement of Jesus' divine sonship is followed by his command for them to be silent, a command that forms a key component of the Markan secrecy motif, known as the 'messianic secret' (see Tuckett 1983).

A command to silence features prominently in the account of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, a scene that marks an important turning point in Mark's Gospel (8:27–30). When Jesus asks his disciples, 'Who do you say that I am?' Peter acts as their representative and, in the light of Jesus' miracles and teaching ministry, responds, 'You are the Messiah (or: the Christ).' This declaration of Jesus' messianic status, the first time for it to be mentioned since the introduction (1:1), is curiously followed by Jesus' command for them 'not to tell anyone about him' (8:30). This response does not amount to a rejection of Peter's confession, although Jesus immediately qualifies it by openly predicting that he, the 'Son of Man', must suffer, be rejected by the authorities, killed and then rise again (8:31; cf. 9:31; 10:32–4). In other words, Jesus emphasizes that the true meaning of his messiahship cannot be understood in isolation from his suffering, death and resurrection. Peter is clearly unable to reconcile his own concept of messiahship (presumably based on certain traditional Jewish expectations) with the theme of suffering (8:32–3), while Jesus will later stress that the significance of his messianic identity cannot be restricted to such categories as 'Son of David' (12:35–7; Marcus 1993: 130–52). On the occasion of the transfiguration, after the divine voice declares, 'This is my Son, the Beloved' (9:7), the disciples are again commanded to say nothing of this revelation of Jesus' glory until after the resurrection (9:9). Only in the light of Jesus' death can his divine sonship be openly acknowledged by others.

Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem brings about the fulfilment of his earlier predictions. Since the shadow of his death clearly looms over the narrative, the Markan secrecy motif now gives way to openness and disclosure. When the high priest questions

Jesus about his identity during his trial before the Sanhedrin, he brings together the two titles which have hitherto been kept separate (apart from 1:1): 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed one?' (14:61, 'the Blessed one' is a circumlocution for 'God'). Jesus, for the first and only time in Mark's Gospel, unequivocally affirms his identity ('I am'), and continues by speaking of his future vindication as the Son of Man enthroned at God's right hand and who will return in glory (14:62; cf. Ps. 110:1; Dan. 7:13). It is at this point in the narrative, with Jesus' fate now sealed as he is charged with blasphemy (14:64), that he can publicly declare his true identity. Jesus' divine sonship is consequently acclaimed at the moment of his death on the cross, not by a supernatural being or one of the disciples, but by a Roman centurion: 'Truly this man was God's Son' (15:39). This marks the climax of Mark's narrative christology.

The Gospel of Matthew

Mark's Gospel was employed by Matthew and Luke, who, independently of each other, also made use of another source consisting of Jesus' sayings (known as Q, from the German word *Quelle* = source) as well as their own special material. Both Matthew and Luke, whose Gospels were composed sometime during the final quarter of the first century CE, essentially follow the general outline of the Markan narrative after their infancy narratives. Identifying the distinctive christological features of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke certainly involves studying how they have modified and interpreted their sources, but it is the interweaving of christological themes in their narratives that discloses the true depth of the Matthean and Lukan presentations of Jesus.

Several of the key christological motifs in Matthew's Gospel are already set out in the four opening chapters (the infancy, baptism and temptation narratives). The first theme highlighted by Matthew in his infancy narrative is Jesus' status as the Messiah who is the fulfilment of Israel's hopes. His messianic identity as 'Son of David' is explicated in an account of his genealogy (1:1–17), while Jesus' Davidic descent is legitimized in a narrative stressing his adoption and naming by Joseph (1:18–25). His role as the long-awaited Messiah of Israel is confirmed by the various scriptural prophecies fulfilled in the events of his birth to a virgin (1:23) in Bethlehem (2:6), his return from Egypt (2:15) and Herod's slaughter (2:18). Jesus' public ministry in Galilee is described, moreover, in terms of his mission to the lost sheep of Israel (9:36; 15:24), and, after he is presented as the supreme interpreter of the Torah through his Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), the narratives about his healings are said to offer further confirmation that he is the one in whom scriptural prophecies find their fulfilment: 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases' (8:17; citing Isa. 53:4). However, the growing hostility of the Jewish religious leaders towards Jesus leads him to end the parable of the wicked husbandmen with the words, 'The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom' (21:43). The disciples form the nucleus of this 'new people' (Stanton 1992: 10–12), while the inclusion of Gentiles is described as the fulfilment of Scripture (4:15–16; 12:18–21) and as the core of the commission received by the disciples after Jesus' resurrection (28:19–20). This unmistakable

focus on mission to the Gentiles, brought about by Israel's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, is integral to what has been described as Matthew's 'inclusive story' (Luz 1995: 9), for it mirrors the situation of the first recipients of this Gospel, who probably no longer remained within the synagogue and for whom the Gentile mission was a major concern.

A study of Matthean christology cannot overlook the centrality of Jesus' divine sonship in this Gospel. The Markan secrecy motif in relation to the 'Son of God' title is not sustained by Matthew, and his redactional activity includes the modification of the disciples' response at the end of the sea-walking narrative (Matt. 14:33: 'Truly you are the Son of God'; cf. Mark 6:52), thus preparing for Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi: 'You are the Messiah (or the Christ), the Son of the living God' (16:16). The divine origin of Jesus' sonship is of course established by Matthew in his infancy narrative, since the virgin birth prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 (LXX) occurs through the power of the Holy Spirit. How, then, does Matthew envisage and elaborate upon the significance of Jesus as the 'Son of God'? Jesus' sonship certainly expresses his unique relationship with God, both in terms of his sovereign authority (14:33) and their mutual knowledge (11:27). But Matthew places particular emphasis on the obedience of Jesus as Son. By means of his baptism he 'fulfils all righteousness' (3:15), as confirmed by God (3:17: 'This is my Son, the Beloved'), and during his testing by Satan (4:3, 6: 'If you are the Son of God . . .') Jesus refuses to use his power for any purpose other than to accomplish God's will. His path of obedience is also a path of suffering that leads to the pouring out of his blood for the forgiveness of sins (26:28), thereby echoing the earlier interpretative explanation of the name 'Jesus' (1:21: 'he will save his people from their sins'). Jesus remains obedient unto death and refuses to succumb to testing by the crowds and chief priests, who mockingly challenge him to descend from the cross (27:38–44).

Matthew, like so many New Testament writers, emphasizes that God ultimately vindicates his Son by raising him from the dead. The first words of the risen Jesus to his disciples as he appears to them on the mountain is that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him (28:18), reminiscent of his earlier predictions of future judgement and glorious return as the Son of Man. What is even more striking is that the Gospel ends on a christological note already encountered in the [first chapter](#), since the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 is fulfilled both in the virginal conception of Jesus and in his naming as 'Emmanuel', meaning 'God is with us' (1:23). Matthew accordingly stresses from the outset that Jesus is in fact God's presence with his people (cf. 18:20), a theme that resonates in the final declaration of the risen Jesus to his disciples: 'I am with you always, to the end of the age' (28:20).

The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles

The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles form a two-volume composition by an author who emphasizes the continuation between the life and teaching of Jesus and the mission of his followers. Indeed, an important theological theme for an understanding of Lukan christology is the sustained focus in Luke–Acts on Jesus' life and ministry and the establishment of the church as the realization of the salvific purpose of God (Squires 1993; Green 1995). This theme is expressed in a variety of

ways, including the use of vocabulary relating to God's plan or design (*boulē*; cf. Luke 7:30; Acts 2:23; 20:27) and the Lukan emphasis on the necessity of events (cf. Luke 9:22; 24:7; Acts 3:21; 17:3) as predetermined by God (Luke 22:22; Acts 10:42). Central to the divine plan is the fulfilment in Jesus of God's ancient promises, a theme firmly established in the Lukan birth and infancy narratives. The story begins in the Temple, where the message that salvation comes through the Lord's Messiah (2:26) is received by those like Simeon and Anna who long for Israel's consolation and redemption (cf. 2:25, 30–2, 38). Thus Zechariah blesses the God of Israel who has raised 'the horn of salvation' within the house of David (1:69), and the angel of the Lord announces the birth of a saviour in the city of David 'who is the Messiah, the Lord' (2:11). It is the language of royal messianic hopes that also characterizes Gabriel's announcement of Jesus' birth to Mary: 'he will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David' (1:32). The acclamation 'Son of the Most High' draws from traditions about the Davidic king (Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:12–16) and the Davidic descent of Joseph is noted (1:27; 2:4; 3:31), but there is no doubt that Luke, like Matthew, is eager to stress that Jesus' divine sonship is unique by virtue of his conception by the Holy Spirit (1:35).

The theme of Jesus' unique relationship with the Father is also adopted by Luke from his sources, and the emphasis on the Son's obedience serves to reinforce the Lukan interest in the saving plan of God. The activity of the Holy Spirit, again indicative of divine purpose and guidance, features prominently in the prelude to Jesus' Galilean ministry (3:22; 4:1, 14) and in the opening scene of that ministry set in Nazareth. Jesus here announces to his synagogue audience that the passage from Isaiah (Isa. 61:1–2, conflated with 58:6) is fulfilled in their presence (4:21). Hence Luke presents this Isaianic text ('The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor . . .') as an expression of the purpose and significance of Jesus' ministry. He has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to carry out a ministry of proclamation to the poor (cf. 6:20; 18:22), a message of release to the oppressed, including lepers (5:12–16), women (13:10–17) and tax collectors (5:27–32; 19:1–10). And although Jesus himself has little contact with Gentiles during his earthly ministry (cf. 7:1–10), his mission of removing those barriers that divide people prepares the way for the Gentile mission of the apostles (24:47), described by Luke in his second volume (Green 1995: 47–8, 126).

Luke also stresses, to a far greater extent than the other Gospels, that Jesus engages in a prophetic ministry. His rejection by the people of Nazareth leads him to draw a parallel between his own situation and the activity of the prophets Elijah and Elisha (4:24–7), while, on a more positive note, the people of Nain glorify God after Jesus has raised the widow's son and declare, 'A great prophet has risen among us' (7:16; cf. 24:19; Acts 2:22). Towards the end of the Galilean ministry, after Peter's confession that Jesus is 'the Messiah of God' (9:20) and Jesus predicts his suffering and rejection (9:22), the Lukan transfiguration scene includes an unparalleled reference to Moses and Elijah speaking of the 'departure' (*exodos*) that Jesus was about to accomplish in Jerusalem (9:31). The term *exodos* not only implies an understanding of Jesus as the Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15–18; cf. Acts 3:22–3; 7:37), but it may point to his departure through death and resurrection as a 'new exodus' (Tuckett 1996: 84).

A distinctive aspect of Luke's Gospel is the extended narrative of Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem (9:51 – 19:44), whose importance is indicated by its introduction: 'When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.' This statement expresses Jesus' resolve to reach the city where his mission and destiny will be fulfilled through his passion, death, resurrection and ascension (his 'taking up'; cf. Acts 1:2, 11, 22). During this journey Jesus declares that he must (*dei*) be on his way, 'because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem' (13:33). After the resurrection Jesus tells the two disciples on the road to Emmaus that it was necessary (*dei*) for the Messiah to suffer such things in order to enter into his glory, as written in Moses and the prophets (24:26–7). And when he appears to the eleven disciples in Jerusalem, he again draws attention to the fulfilment of what Moses, the prophets and the psalms had written about him, namely 'that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day (24:44–6). In the same way as the infancy narrative announces that Israel's long-awaited salvation is realized in Jesus, the final chapter highlights the theme that Jesus, the Messiah who suffered and is vindicated through resurrection, is indeed the fulfilment of God's promises. Before his ascension Jesus commissions the disciples to act as his witnesses that 'repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem' (24:47–8). This commission prepares for the disciples' mission after their empowerment by the Holy Spirit, a mission narrated in the Acts of the Apostles.

Luke's favoured vehicle for his christological message in the first half of Acts is a series of speeches, delivered by Peter on such occasions as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (2:14–39), after the healing of the lame man in Solomon's Portico (3:12–26), in the presence of the Sanhedrin (4:8–12) and Jewish leaders (5:29–32), and his missionary speech to Cornelius and his household in Caesarea (10:34–43). To these one may add the address delivered by Paul to Jews and Godfearers in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (13:16–41). The elements that feature prominently in the speeches are kerygmatic summaries of the events of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and exaltation, a demonstration that these events fulfil Scripture, and an appeal for repentance (see Bauckham 1996). Consistency of language and style, as well as variations in actual content and sequence, are evident in these speeches, prompting much debate among interpreters as to whether Luke has made use of earlier sources or that the speeches should be viewed as purely Lukan compositions.

While interest in Jesus' earthly life is displayed in some of the kerygmatic summaries (Acts 2:22; 10:37–9), it is his death, resurrection and exaltation that are of central concern. The suffering and death of Jesus the Messiah are depicted as events that accord with 'the definite plan and foreknowledge of God' (2:23; cf. 4:28) or as foretold in Scripture (3:18; cf. 17:2–3; 26:22–3), recalling Jesus' words after his resurrection. A recurring motif in these speeches is the contrast between the conduct of those responsible for Jesus' death and the way God reverses their actions through his powerful act of raising him from the dead. This motif appears in its most concise form in Peter's speech before the Sanhedrin, where he tells the Jews that the healing of the lame man was 'by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead' (4:10), before describing this act of reversal in terms

of the rejected stone that becomes the cornerstone (4:11, citing Ps. 118:22). Some of the speeches delivered by Peter and Paul therefore demonstrate the centrality of Jesus' resurrection in the saving purpose of God by appealing to the Scriptures now fulfilled (2:25–32 [Ps. 16:8–11]; 13:32–7 [Pss 2:7; 16:10]) and confirmed by the apostles in their role as witnesses to the risen Christ (2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:41; 13:31).

As a result of his resurrection and ascension, Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God (2:34–5, citing Ps. 110:1) who 'has made him both Lord and Messiah' (2:36). This declaration could imply that the titles *kyrios* and *christos* were first conferred upon Jesus by virtue of his resurrection, although the Lukan emphasis is possibly on divine confirmation rather than installation. Several other christological titles or designations, some unparalleled, occur in Acts, especially in Peter's speech after the healing of the lame man: Jesus is the Servant glorified by God (3:13, 26), the Holy and Righteous One (3:14; cf. 7:52; 22:14), the Founder of Life (3:15; 5:31), the Prophet like Moses (3:22–5). The Jews of Jerusalem would presumably be able to appreciate the theological force of these titles, but they find no place in Peter's speech at Caesarea where the emphasis lies on the universal significance of Jesus as 'Lord of all' (10:36). He is the one whose resurrection and ascension serve as a guarantee for his future role as 'judge of the living and the dead' (10:42).

The repeated call for repentance in the speeches of Peter and Paul highlights the Lukan presentation of Jesus as the divine agent of salvation (2:38–9; 3:19; 5:31; 13:38–9). The final words of Joel 3:1–5, the scriptural passage with which Paul opens his Pentecost speech, announces that 'everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved'. These words are clearly appropriated to Jesus as 'Lord', for Peter declares to the Sanhedrin that there is salvation in no one else, since there is no other name 'by which we must be saved' (4:12). The invocation of Jesus' name signifies his continuing power to effect salvation, and it is for this reason that the proclamation of the Christ-event in the speeches is accompanied by a call for repentance. The forgiveness of sins proclaimed by the earthly Jesus (Luke 5:20, 32; 7:47–50) is once more offered by the apostles to those who repent and turn to him as their Saviour (Acts 5:31).

The letter to the Hebrews

The letter to the Hebrews offers one of the most distinctive interpretations of Jesus in the New Testament, although the identity of its author, as well as the circumstances and location of its recipients, are shrouded in mystery. What does become clear is that this letter's christology is integrally linked to the author's pastoral concerns, for he exhorts his readers to hold on to their faith during a time of crisis for the community. Appeal is therefore made in the prologue (1:1–4) to the confession of faith shared by the author and his readers (Isaacs 1992: 186–8), beginning with the definitive character of God's revelation in Jesus, his Son, as compared with the 'many and various ways' God spoke through the prophets. Jesus' divine sonship, a major christological theme in this letter, is presented in all-embracing and cosmic terms: the one whom God has appointed heir of all things (cf. Ps. 2:8) is the one 'through whom he also created the worlds' (1:2). Echoes of Jewish traditions relating to the role of divine Wisdom can be detected in this description of the Son as active

in creation (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; John 1:3), and especially in the claim that 'he is the reflection of God's glory' (1:3; cf. Wisdom 7:26). But it is upon two further aspects of the Son's activity as outlined in the prologue that the letter will focus, namely that Christ in his atoning death has made purification for sins and has accordingly been exalted to the right hand of God (1:3). The allusion to Psalm 110:1 prepares the way for an intricately developed christology steeped in citations of and allusions to Scripture, while the universal sovereignty granted to the Son by means of his exaltation affirms his superiority to the angels (1:4).

The author proceeds to establish the Son's unique status over against the angels with the aid of seven proof-texts (1:5–14). Among the passages cited are two royal Davidic traditions (Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14) whose influence on the shaping of early christological reflection is attested in many of the New Testament writings already considered. Due to the Son's incomparable status and his eternal rule as one designated *theos* (1:8, citing Ps. 45:6) and *kyrios* (1:10, citing Ps. 102:25), the angels are to worship him (1:6) and act as ministering servants (1:14). The Son alone is enthroned at the right hand of God, as confirmed by a seventh scriptural citation to which the prologue has already alluded (1:13, citing Ps. 110:1). The highlighting of Jesus' supremacy over the angels continues in 2:5–9, this time to emphasize that God intends to subject all things to humankind. An exposition based on Psalm 8:4–6 leads the author to explain that Jesus was for a little while made lower than the angels, but he is now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering and death he endured for all (cf. 1:3; 10:12). Christ is also the 'pioneer of their salvation' (2:10; cf. 5:9), for people will be brought to glory as a result of his death and exaltation. It was necessary for him to be made perfect through sufferings (2:10; cf. 5:8) and live in solidarity with the rest of humankind, because only one who is fully human can be a 'merciful and faithful high priest' making a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people (2:14–18).

Having announced that Jesus is high priest (2:17), this christological theme is taken up again in the description of the Son of God as a 'great high priest who has passed through the heavens' (4:14), a theme explored in detail in subsequent chapters (5:1–10; 7:1–10:18). Christ qualifies for the high priestly role because of his genuine capacity to sympathize with human weaknesses, yet himself without sin (4:15; cf. 7:26–7). The divine appointment of Jesus to the office of high priest is confirmed by Scripture (5:5–6), with the author appealing for the second time to Psalm 2:7, and to another royal psalm repeatedly cited by him in connection with Jesus' exaltation, this time in relation to his priesthood: 'You are a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedek' (110:4). The implications of this high priestly designation for Jesus, unparalleled in other New Testament writings, are explained in an exposition of the only other passage in Scripture to mention the king-priest Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18–20). It is argued that this high priestly order is eternal since the Genesis passage fails to mention the father, mother or genealogy of Melchizedek (7:3), and, because he received tithes from Abraham and blessed him, Melchizedek must have been greater than the patriarch and the descendants of Levi who came from Abraham (7:4–10). Thus the high priesthood of Jesus 'in the order of Melchizedek' is superior to the Levitical priesthood and is permanently effective (7:23–5); Christ, due to his resurrection and ascension rather than physical descent,

is eternally high priest by ‘the power of an indestructible life’ (7:16), interceding on behalf of those who draw near to God through him (7:25).

Unlike the repeated offerings presented by the Levitical priests, Jesus did this ‘once for all’ when he offered himself as the atoning sacrifice (7:26–7; cf. 9:14, 24–6). This is followed by a detailed demonstration of the effectiveness of the sacrifice made by the eternal high priest who now ministers in the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus has become the mediator of a new and better covenant (8:6; 9:15; 12:24). The high priest of the old order entered the Holy of Holies once a year to make a sacrifice of atonement for sins (9:7), but Jesus, by means of his sacrificial death, has entered once for all into ‘the Holy Place’, the very presence of God (9:12; cf. 10:12). The message communicated by the author of Hebrews is that Jesus has made the heavenly sanctuary accessible to all, for his death has opened up the way to enable those who accompany him to enter heaven itself (10:19–21). For this reason, those presently in danger of losing hope are urged by the author to stand firm in their faith and to approach the throne of grace with confidence (4:16). In Jesus they find not only their forerunner (6:20), but the pioneer and perfecter of their faith (12:1–4), for his supreme example of endurance and faithfulness offers encouragement to believers in their present trials (12:5–13).

The book of Revelation

Those addressed as ‘the seven churches in Asia’ (1:4) are the recipients of a letter introduced by the author as ‘the revelation (*apokalypsis*) of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place’ (1:1). This New Testament writing is therefore presented as a record of the divine revelation given to Jesus Christ, the one whose decisive role in the unfolding of ‘what is and what is to take place’ (1:19) is demonstrated in a series of heavenly visions. John, nevertheless, experiences his first vision on the island of Patmos (1:9–20), where he encounters ‘one like a son of man’ who commands him to write down messages for the seven churches. This christophany depicts Jesus as a glorious heavenly being (1:12–16), one whose angelic and divine attributes are described in language drawn from biblical angelophanies and theophanies (cf. Dan. 7:9–14; 10:5–6; Ezek. 1:24; 9:2). This exalted portrayal of Jesus continues when he identifies himself to the seer: ‘I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever’ (1:17–18). The [second part](#) of this declaration confirms that the heavenly figure is the crucified and risen Christ, whereas the initial self-designation (cf. 2:8; 22:13) resembles God’s own self-declaration (1:8; 21:6) and especially his claim to sovereignty in Deutero-Isaiah (44:6; 48:12; cf. 41:4). For the author of Revelation to describe Christ as ‘the first and the last’, and as ‘the origin of God’s creation’ (3:14; cf. Col. 1:15), is to associate him with God in the closest possible terms (see Bauckham 1993a: 54–8).

It is in the vision of the heavenly throne-room (Rev. 4–5) that the close connection between God and Christ is made most apparent. It describes the worship offered by the heavenly host to God, ‘the one seated on the throne’ (4:8–11), in whose hand is a scroll with seven seals (5:1). John is told that the only one worthy to open the scroll is ‘the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David’ (5:5), a figure described with the aid of Jewish messianic designations (cf. Gen. 49:9; Isa. 11:1, 10). But

what John actually sees is a Lamb standing as though it had been slain (5:6). The appearance of the Lamb marks the introduction of a central christological image in Revelation, for the Lamb-Messiah is the crucified Christ who has conquered by means of his redemptive death. In celebration of his victory, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sing a new song, declaring that the Lamb is worthy to open the scroll because he has by his blood ransomed people for God from all the nations, and 'made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God' (5:9–10; cf. 1:5–6).

A second hymn of praise to the Lamb sung by myriads of angels (5:11–12) closely resembles the honouring of God the Creator as worthy to receive glory and honour and power (4:11). In fact the third hymn sung by the whole creation is addressed to them both: 'To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever', and the elders fall down and worship (5:13–14). This scene signifies that the Lamb, having taken the scroll, becomes the object of heavenly worship alongside God, while Christ elsewhere states that he has 'sat down with my Father on his throne' (3:21; cf. 7:17; 22:1, 3). This is all the more significant in view of the references to an angel refusing obeisance from John, declaring, 'Worship God!' (19:10; 22:8–9). There are indications, however, that the inclusion of Christ as the object of worship is not viewed by the author of Revelation as a compromise of monotheistic belief (cf. 15:3–4). It has, for example, recently been noted that formulaic expressions such as 'before the throne and before the Lamb' (7:9; cf. 6:16) and 'the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah' (11:15; cf. 12:10; 20:6) certainly express the close relationship between God and the Lamb, yet at the same time they retain the distinction between them (Stuckenbruck 1995: 261–2).

Following the scene of heavenly worship, the Lamb begins to open the seals in order to reveal the contents of the scroll, thereby initiating the plan that will lead to the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. The involvement of the Lamb in this plan of judgement and salvation, in the struggle between good and evil, means that he brings wrath upon the wicked (cf. 6:16) but leads his people to springs of living water (7:17); he stands on Mount Zion in triumph with those who have been redeemed from the earth (14:1–5). Revelation repeatedly emphasizes the nearness of the end, and Christ himself declares, 'I am coming soon' (3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). And while the Lamb has already conquered by his sacrificial death (3:21; 5:5; cf. 12:11), he will conquer again at the *parousia*. And so John receives a vision of Christ appearing as a rider on a white horse with the armies of heaven (19:11–16). He is called 'Faithful and True' (19:11), 'the Word of God' (19:13), 'King of kings and Lord of lords' (19:16; cf. 17:14), and with a sharp sword coming from his mouth he strikes the nations (cf. Isa. 11:4). The final victory over the powers of evil will result in the new creation, and John sees a holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven (21:1–2). The appearance of heaven on earth thus signifies the fulfilment of God's plan to establish his universal kingdom, for his presence fills the new Jerusalem whose temple is 'the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb' (21:22).

The Gospel of John and the letters of John

The Gospel of John offers the following summary statement in its originally intended conclusion: 'But these [the signs] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is

the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name' (20:31). The two titles selected as expressions of the christological belief that will lead to life figure prominently in the other Gospels, and certainly provide the key to the Markan portrayal of Jesus. Behind this Johannine statement, however, there lies a distinctive christology that not only introduces new dimensions of meaning and significance to the titles 'Messiah' and particularly 'Son of God', but offers a presentation of Jesus that cannot be contained in the two titles. Christological claims are the focus of John's Gospel from beginning to end; its narratives and discourses are explicitly concerned with Jesus' true identity and, in a manner unparalleled in the Synoptic Gospels, with his revelatory and salvific role. The Johannine Jesus speaks openly about his origin and identity, discusses his relationship with the Father and offers the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him. A particular characteristic of the Fourth Gospel is that Jesus is often depicted as defending his christological assertions in confrontation with 'the Jews', a designation used primarily for the Jewish religious authorities who even accuse Jesus of making himself equal to God (5:18–19; 10:33). As it is now widely accepted that John's Gospel presents a two-level drama centred on the historical Jesus and the situation of the evangelist and his community (Martyn 1979), christology was at the heart of the controversies that led to the synagogue expulsion of those who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah (cf. 9:22; 12:42; 16:2). Exalted claims about Jesus were either the cause (Brown 1979) or the result (Martyn 1979) of the separation of believers forming 'the Johannine community', while the Gospel itself developed over a period of time before reaching its present form around 85–95 CE.

John's christological assertions begin in the prologue (1:1–18), where Jesus is identified with the Word (*logos*) of God. To state that the Word was 'in the beginning' before creation (1:1) amounts to a declaration of timeless existence, one to which Jesus lays claim during his earthly ministry (cf. 8:58; 17:5), whereas to describe the Word as the agent of creation (1:3) echoes those Wisdom traditions appropriated by other writers (cf. Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). The opening verse clearly seeks to express the relationship between the Word and God ('the Word was with God'), followed by the affirmation that 'the Word was God'. The precise meaning of the latter declaration continues to be the subject of considerable debate, with many scholars noting the subtleties of the Greek text; the definite article is included before 'God' in the declaration 'the Word was with God' (*ho theos*), but not in the clause 'the Word was God (*theos*)'. This variation is then interpreted to mean that, while the prologue identifies the Word as God (*theos*), 'it avoids any suggestion of personal identification of the Word with the Father' (Brown 1966, 1: 24). Even if the verse does preserve a distinction between the Word and God without separating them, it is significant that Jesus is also called *theos* in 1:18 (if one accepts the reading 'God, the only Son') and in the confession of Thomas (20:28: 'My Lord and my God'). This is not a title claimed by the earthly Jesus, but its attribution to Christ at key points in the Gospel expresses the conviction that he is the authentic and definitive revelation of God. As the vehicle of God's self-revelation in the world, the Word becomes flesh and reveals his glory (1:14). And since 'no one has ever seen God' (1:18; cf. Exod. 33:20), the revelation communicated by the Son is superior to that received in the past, for he alone is in direct communion with the Father.

It is through the Son, the Word incarnate, that humankind receives the perfect revelation of life (1:4), light (1:4–5), grace and truth (1:14) and God (1:18).

Scholars who attempt to identify different christological strands in the Fourth Gospel usually attribute the prologue to a later stage of development, although there is no doubt that this Logos christology determines the overall Johannine presentation of Jesus in the Gospel in its present form. The Logos title does not appear again, but the Father–Son language (1:14–18) is sustained throughout and serves as a key concept to express the significance of Jesus as the one who reveals God. To express his intimate relationship with God, Jesus is described as the ‘only Son’ (1:14; 3:16, 18) who is loved by the Father (cf. 5:20; 10:17) and to whom he has ‘placed all things in his hands’ (3:35). The one sent into the world (3:17; 10:36) also expresses consciousness of his eternal status as Son, for when Jesus states, ‘I declare what I have seen in the Father’s presence’ (8:38), he is testifying to what he, and he alone, has seen and heard in heaven before he was sent into the world. Even the words and works of the Son are not his own, but those of the Father (cf. 5:36; 8:28; 12:49–50; 14:10).

During his earthly life the Son speaks and acts in perfect unity with the Father (10:30: ‘The Father and I are one’); to see him is to see the Father (12:45; 14:9), and whoever knows him knows the Father (8:19; 14:7). Because belief in Jesus leads to eternal life, the Son can declare that he, like the Father, has the power to give life (5:21). But he has also been given authority to execute judgement (5:27), for all who encounter Jesus are obliged to respond to him; those who believe enter the light and gain life, but those who reject him remain in darkness and face death. The coming of Jesus therefore amounts to the judgement of this world (12:31), even though the purpose of his mission was in order that ‘the world might be saved through him’ (3:17). From the early days of his ministry Jesus commits himself to the will of the Father: ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work’ (4:34). It is in obedience to the Father’s plan that he follows the path of the cross, but as one who is in full control (cf. 13:27; 18:4–8; 19:30), for ‘no one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord’ (10:18). Jesus’ death is therefore depicted in John’s Gospel as the fulfilment of his mission to reveal the Father and as the completion of his salvific work: ‘It is finished’ (19:30). It is the fulfilment of Jesus’ prediction that he must be lifted up on the cross so that whoever believes in him may receive eternal life (3:14–15). The ‘lifting up’ of Jesus, linked specifically to his identity as the Son of Man, points to this salvific death as exaltation, for the evangelist takes advantage of the double meaning of a Greek verb (*hypsōō*) that can connote both the lifting up of Jesus on the cross as well as his exaltation (3:14; 8:28; 12:32–4). Moreover, it signifies the arrival of Jesus’ hour of glorification (12:23; 13:31), for his passion is the supreme revelation of divine glory, as well as the means whereby the Son returns to the Father and ascends to the glory which was his before creation (17:5).

The significance of Jesus as the revelatory and salvific presence of God also finds expression in the Johannine ‘I am’ declarations. On seven occasions Jesus’ use of ‘I am’ (*egō eimi*) is combined with an image drawn primarily from scriptural promises of divine salvation. When Jesus declares that he is the bread of life (6:35), the light of the world (8:12) or the true vine (15:1), such evocative images serve to demonstrate

that he is the source and giver of eternal life. However, certain pronouncements are attributed to Jesus in which *egō eimi* possesses no predicate or antecedent. He declares to his opponents, 'You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am (he)' (8:24; cf. 8:28, 58), and, when Jesus predicts his imminent betrayal, he informs the disciples, 'I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am (he)' (13:19). To these may be added the occurrences of *egō eimi* where a predicate is implied (4:26; 18:5, 8; cf. 6:20), although its use by Jesus as he walks on the sea (6:20) and the dramatic response of the arresting party in the garden (18:6) suggest that it serves here as more than a form of self-identification, especially in view of the fourth evangelist's fondness for words or expressions with double meanings. The key that appears to unlock the christological significance of these 'absolute' statements is the distinctive use of *egō eimi* in the Greek versions of Isaiah (41:4; 43:10; 46:4; 52:6) and the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:39) to render Yahweh's claim to unique sovereignty (Hebrew: *anî hû'*). Indeed the presentation and function of *egō eimi* as uttered by Jesus in the Fourth Gospel bears striking resemblance to its setting and purpose in these biblical traditions. Jesus, like Yahweh, pronounces *egō eimi* to convey his role as revealer and saviour; he exists from eternity (8:58), is able to foretell and control events (13:19; 18:5), offers salvation to those who believe in him (6:20; 8:28; 18:8), while those who reject him face condemnation (8:24). The Johannine Jesus can declare *egō eimi* in this manner because he is the eternal Word incarnate, the Son who speaks and acts in unity with the Father, the unique revelation of God.

However, one factor that led to the composition of the Johannine letters, particularly the first and second, was a crisis caused by those who, as a result of their christological views, had recently left the community. The root of this controversy seems to be that certain believers deviated from the teaching of the Johannine community by embracing a kind of 'docetic' christology that cast doubt on the reality of Jesus' humanity and sufferings; his divine glory was emphasized to such an extent that the significance of his earthly life and the salvific effects of his death were disputed. The response expressed in the first two letters of John is to reaffirm the confession that 'Jesus Christ has come in the flesh' (1 John 4:2–3; 2 John 7) and that he 'came by water and blood' (1 John 5:6). Believers are also exhorted to walk in the light, for Jesus' blood cleanses from all sin (1:7; cf. 2:1–2; 3:5; 4:10). Other pronouncements certainly resemble the christology of John's Gospel, a writing known in its present or earlier form to the author(s) of the Johannine letters. For to state that Jesus was the Son sent by God 'so that we might live through him' (1 John 4:9) firmly echoes the Gospel's pivotal declaration that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life' (3:16). In this respect both the Gospel and letters of John attest the central christological conviction expressed in all the writings of the New Testament, namely that Jesus, the Christ and unique Son of God, is the key to divine salvation.

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CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

DEATH AND AFTERLIFE



John J. Collins

‘If Christ has not been raised,’ says St Paul, ‘your faith is futile . . . If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied’ (1 Cor 15: 17, 19). The belief in resurrection is so fundamental to Christianity that Christians are often surprised to discover how alien it was to the religion of ancient Israel. The belief in a significant, differentiated, life after death only gained currency in Judaism in the Hellenistic period, and was not universally accepted even then. Without these new developments in Judaism in the Hellenistic age, however, the Christian belief in resurrection would have been unintelligible.

DEATH IN THE ANCIENT NEW EAST

In the ancient Near East, Egypt was exceptional in having a widespread belief in immortality,¹ but Egyptian ideas on this subject leave no verifiable trace in the Hebrew Bible. The attitude of the Semitic cultures is perhaps best summed up in the futile quest of Gilgamesh, who, though two-thirds divine, is told both by the God Shamash and by Siduri the ale-wife that he will not find the (eternal) life that he seeks, for ‘when the gods created mankind they appointed death for mankind and kept life for themselves.’² The lot of humankind is vividly expressed in the death-dream of Enkidu, where he is driven down ‘to the house which those who enter cannot leave, on the road where travelling is one way only, to the house where those who stay are deprived of light, where dust is their food, and clay their bread. They are clothed, like birds, with feathers, and they see no light, and they dwell in darkness.’³ In Akkadian the Netherworld is *māt la târi*, the land of no return. A very similar account of the Netherworld is found in the myth of *Ishtar’s Descent to the Netherworld*.⁴ There is some variation in the Akkadian accounts of the Netherworld. In some cases it is gloomy and melancholic, but serene, while in others it is terrifying. In the neo-Assyrian *Vision of the Netherworld*, a crown-prince called Kummaya (possibly a pseudonym for Assurbanipal) is hauled before Nergal, god of the Netherworld, who is attended by an entourage of deities in hybrid form: ‘The nether world was filled with terror . . . when [I] saw him, my legs trembled as his brilliance overwhelmed me.’⁵ Only exceptional individuals, like the flood-hero Utnapishtim, are allowed to escape it and be as gods.⁶ Even Adapa, in the myth that bears his

name, refuses the bread and water of life when they are offered to him and is sent back to earth.

The culture of Canaan, which provided the immediate context of early Israel, is known to us mainly from the Ugaritic texts. There Death is portrayed as a god, Mot, who is an adversary of Baal. At one point in the myth Baal is given into his power and Mot swallows him: 'One lip to earth, one lip to the heavens; he will stretch his tongue to the stars. Baal must enter inside him; he must go down into his mouth, like an olive cake, the earth's produce, the fruit of the trees.'⁷ Baal is eventually rescued from Death by the goddess Anat, and so may be said to be a dying and rising god. Whether any human beings can hope for beatific afterlife, however, is disputed. The main issue here concerns figures called Rephaim, and the institution of the *marzēah*. The Rephaim have been identified as gods, shades of the dead, and/or living persons.⁸ The identification as gods has few adherents. The identification both with the shades and with people (giants, warriors, or vaguely defined ethnic groups) can be supported by analogy from the Hebrew Bible.⁹ Some scholars argue that they were originally kings and heroes, who were deified after death.¹⁰ Recently Brian Schmidt has argued strenuously that they were legendary heroes and earthly warriors. But even Schmidt allows that 'the ancient Rephaim' (*rp'im qdmym*) were associated with the Netherworld.¹¹ These ancient Rephaim, and some dead kings, are invoked in *KTU* 1.161, which appears to reflect a funerary ritual. Other texts speak of the Rephaim coming to a feast, without making clear whether the reference is to dead or living beings.¹² Some scholars hold that the *marzēah* entailed such a feast for and with the dead ancestors, or *Rephaim*.¹³ The *marzēah* is widely attested over a period of more than a thousand years. It was an institution that had a banquet hall, had a designated leader and patron deity or deities, and was associated especially with drinking.¹⁴ The evidence that it was a funerary institution consists mainly of a Nabatean text that refers to 'the *marzēah* of Obodas the god'¹⁵ (Obodas was a historical king) and Jeremiah 16:5, where Jeremiah is told not to enter the *bêt marzēah* to lament or grieve. Whether it was always or necessarily associated with funerary practices, or was an occasion for communion with the dead, remains uncertain.¹⁶ This issue underlies the debate as to whether the kings of Ugarit were thought to enjoy life with the gods in the hereafter. In the Aramaic Panammu inscription from the eighth century, King Panammu expresses the hope that the son who succeeds him will offer sacrifice to Hadad and 'mention the name of Panammu, saying: "May the soul of Panammu eat with Hadad, and may the soul of Panammu drink with Ha[d]ad."¹⁷ None of these texts, however, implies that the dead kings or Rephaim live permanently with the gods, even on a maximal interpretation, only that they are allowed to feast with the gods on occasion. Their usual abode after death is still the Netherworld.

The idea that a human being could attain eternal life with the gods is proposed in the story of Aqhat, where the goddess Ishtar says to Aqhat: 'Ask for life, O hero Aqhat, ask for life and I will give it to you, immortality and I will bestow it upon you. I will let you count with Baal the years, with the sons of El you will count the months.'¹⁸ But Aqhat replies: 'Don't lie to me, Virgin, for with a hero your lies are wasted. A mortal – what does he get in the end? what does a mortal finally get? plaster poured on his head, lime on top of his skull. As every man dies, I will die;

yes, I too will surely die.¹⁹ Aqhat is no different from Gilgamesh, in this respect. Even if we accept that the dead kings, the ancient Rephaim, might dine with the gods, the common fate was a gloomy existence in the Netherworld.

DEATH IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

According to Genesis 2–3, Adam and Eve are not initially forbidden to eat of the tree of life, but are prevented from doing so after they have transgressed the command relating to the tree of knowledge. Henceforth Adam must eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, ‘until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return’ (Gen 3:19). The sin of Adam, however, is never invoked to explain the human situation in the Hebrew Bible. Ben Sira, writing in the first quarter of the second century BCE, puts the blame on Eve: ‘from a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die’ (Sir 25:24). But elsewhere the same writer implies that mortality is simply the divine pleasure: ‘The Lord created human beings out of earth and makes them return to it again’ (Sir 17:1); ‘this is the Lord’s decree for all flesh’ (41:4). Beginning with Ben Sira, we find increasing speculation about the opening chapters of Genesis, but it is only in texts from the first century CE (St Paul, 4 *Ezra*) that the sin of Adam is well established as the cause of human mortality. The story in Genesis 2–3 has remarkably little influence in the world of the Hebrew Bible.

While there was an obvious sense in which the dead returned to the earth, other ways of describing the fate of the departed are more typical of the biblical texts. Those who die a peaceful death are typically said to be gathered to their ancestors; for example Abraham died ‘in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people’ (Gen 25:8). The idiom here reflects the burial customs of ancient Israel. Family members were buried together in underground caves; Abraham was buried with Sarah in the Cave of Machpelah. Tombs of the Iron Age were often characterized by waist-high benches around three sides of the chamber. The use of caves declined as the bench-tombs grew in popularity. Often, the area under one of the benches was hollowed out to serve as a repository for secondary burial. Bodies were laid on the benches until they had decomposed and then the bones were gathered into the repository. Bench-tombs were the predominant form of burial in Judah from the late eighth to early sixth centuries BCE.²⁰

In a more mythological vein, the dead are said to descend to Sheol. ‘Those that go down to Sheol do not come up’ (Job 7:9). Other designations for the Netherworld include ארץ (land), and בור or שְׁהַת (pit), sometimes modified by תַּהֲתִית or תַּחְתִּית (nether; lowest).²¹ Gates of Sheol are mentioned several times (Isa 38:10; Ps 9:14; Job 38:17). Gates and gate-keepers also figure prominently in Mesopotamian and Egyptian accounts of the Netherworld. Sheol is a place of darkness (Job 17:13; 18:18) and dust (Job 17:16; 21:26; Ps 7:6) and of silence (Pss 31:17–18; 94:17; 115:17; Isa 47:5). Those who go down to Sheol cannot praise God (Pss 30:9; 88:10–12). It is sometimes personified, as Death (*Mot*) is too. It has an insatiable appetite (Isa 5:14; Hab 2:5; Prov 27:20; 30:15b–16) and is said to swallow its victims (Isa 25:8), like Mot in the Ugaritic myth. This mythology is continuous with concepts of the Netherworld in Canaan and Mesopotamia. Sheol is not associated

with terror in the Hebrew Bible, however. The biblical Sheol is not yet a Hell, but merely a gloomy Limbo.

Most scholars assume that everyone in the Hebrew Bible goes to Sheol after death, with the exception of extraordinary individuals such as Enoch and Elijah. Some, however, dispute this view, and argue for a difference between the peaceful death of those who are gathered to their fathers and the evil (violent or premature) death of those who go down to Sheol.²² On this line of interpretation, the psalmist who asks God not to let him go down to Sheol is praying for deliverance from premature death, and to be allowed to live out his life. He was surely not asking for immortality. Similarly Jacob's declaration that 'I shall go down to Sheol to my son mourning' (Gen 37:35) may be taken to mean that he would die prematurely, just as Joseph supposedly had. There are some problems with the distinction, however. Josiah is told that he would be gathered to his ancestors in peace before disaster befell Jerusalem (2 Kgs 22:20) although he would die a violent death. David tells Solomon that he must not let the grey head of Joab 'go down to Sheol in peace' (2 Kgs 2:6), which implies that one might in principle die a peaceful death and go to Sheol. Centuries later, Ben Sira insists that 'whether life is for ten or a hundred or a thousand years, there is no inquiry about it in Hades' (Sir 41:4). In short, neither the fullness of life nor virtue makes a difference as to one's ultimate destination. Similarly the psalmist asks: 'Who can live and never see death? Who can escape the power of Sheol?' (Ps 89:49). It seems likely then that Sheol is the final abode of all mortals, although biblical authors sometimes speak euphemistically about people being gathered to their ancestors in order to avoid the negative associations of Sheol.

The degree to which a cult of the dead was practiced in ancient Israel is controversial. Throughout the period of the monarchy, bowls for food, jars for liquid and sometimes a lamp for light were placed in tombs. Two tombs have been found where a bowl containing sheep bones was covered with another inverted bowl, as if to keep the food warm, while a knife was also provided. Jewelry and amulets were commonly placed in tombs.²³ Various figurines and statuettes are also found. The most common figurines were female pillar figurines with solid or hollow bodies and prominent breasts, emphasized by the arms supporting them.²⁴ These figurines are peculiar to Judean tombs, although they are also found in domestic contexts in Israel. They are found from the eleventh century onward, and are very common by the eighth and seventh centuries. They most probably represent a goddess, possibly Asherah. The prominence of the breasts suggests a concern for fertility. The precise function of such figurines is unclear, but they probably represent some kind of sympathetic magic, or possibly reflect the hope that the dead can intercede on behalf of the living.

Deuteronomy forbids offering tithed food to the dead (Deut 26:14), but does not prohibit other offerings. It also forbids the consulting of ghosts or spirits, or seeking oracles from the dead (18:11) and self-laceration in mourning (14:1). Consultation of the dead is also noted in Isaiah 8:19–23, 19:3 and possibly 29:4. Second Kings notes that Manasseh consulted mediums and wizards (21:6), and that Josiah put them away (23:24). The most famous story about the consultation of the dead, however, concerns Saul and the witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28:

They came to the woman by night. And he said, 'Consult a spirit for me, and bring up for me the one whom I name to you . . .' Then the woman said, 'Whom shall I bring up for you?' He answered, 'Bring up Samuel for me' . . . The woman said to Saul 'I see a divine being (אלהים) coming up out of the ground' (28:8–13).

The larger context of this story shows signs of Deuteronomic influence. Saul anticipates Deuteronomy by banning mediums and wizards from the land. The fact that a story about necromancy is nonetheless told is taken by some scholars as an indication that the incident must have been famous.²⁵ Schmidt, however, has argued that it is a late, post-Deuteronomic invention, and that necromancy was an innovation in Judah, adopted from the Assyrians during the reign of Manasseh.²⁶ The references to necromancy in Isaiah and in Deuteronomic literature are compatible with this view. It is also supported by the absence of clear evidence of the practice in Syria or Palestine prior to that time. We cannot safely infer that the necromancy was known in Israel before the Assyrian period, but the story gives a vivid impression of religious practice during the late monarchy.

BEATIFIC AFTERLIFE IN THE HEBREW BIBLE?

In view of the evidence reviewed thus far, it should be clear that there was little hope for a beatific afterlife in the ancient Near East outside of Egypt. A few biblical texts, however, have been adduced as evidence for belief in a beatific afterlife. These texts are of two kinds, one found especially in the Psalms, describing the presence of God in transcendent terms, and the other found in prophetic texts, using the language of resurrection in connection with the restoration of Israel.²⁷

The key passages in the Psalms are found in Psalms 16: 9–10, 49:16 and 73:23–6. Psalm 16:9–10 ('Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure. For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit') can be interpreted most simply in terms of protection from premature death. A stronger case can be made for Psalm 49:16 ('but God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will take me'). The use of the verb 'take' (לקח) here recalls the fate of Enoch, who 'walked with God; then he was no more for God took him' (Gen 5:24). The context in Psalm 49 is a reassurance that one need not fear those who trust in their wealth, for 'like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd' (Ps 49:15). There is no ransom that one can give to God for one's life, so as to live forever (49:8–10). But the psalmist also affirms that the wise die, together with the fool and the dolt (Ps 49:11), and twice declares that 'humankind shall not live in glory; they perish like the beasts' (49:13, 21). In view of this emphatic refrain, the psalmist's confidence that God will make an exception for him is puzzling.

The verb 'to take' (לקח) is used in a similar way in Psalm 73: 'Nevertheless I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive (תקחני) with honor . . . My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever' (Ps 73:23–6). Here

again there is a contrast with the wicked, who are said to be ‘destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors’ (Ps 73:19). The psalmist perceives the contrasting fates of righteous and wicked when he goes into the sanctuary (73:17). The cultic context raises the possibility that what is at issue here is the sense of the presence of God as an experience that transcends time: ‘For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere’ (Ps 84:10). In poetic language, ‘forever’ may only mean that no end is in view. We might compare the assertion of Canticles 8:6 that ‘love is as strong as death.’

‘Life’ and ‘death’ are often used in this qualitative sense, especially in the wisdom literature.²⁸ In Proverbs 8:36–6 Wisdom declares that ‘whoever finds me finds life . . . all who hate me love death.’ Most scholars regard such statements as affirmations of the transcendent value of wisdom. Some, however, believe that the author of Proverbs affirms a beatific afterlife for the just: ‘for the wise the path of the life leads upward, in order to avoid Sheol below’ (Prov 15:24). Proverbs 12:28 claims that ‘in the path of righteousness there is life, in walking its path there is no death.’ Whether such statements should be taken literally is debatable.²⁹ If they are so taken, they are highly exceptional in the world of the Hebrew Bible. The strongest cases are those of Psalms 49 and 73, which may envisage the hope that the psalmist will be granted an exception to the common fate, as was granted to Enoch or Elijah. A case can also be made that the king was sometimes thought to be immortal. Psalm 21:4–5 says: ‘He asked you for life; you gave it to him – length of days forever and ever.’³⁰ This formulation recalls the offer of Anat to Aqhat in the Ugaritic myth. Anat’s promise is not fulfilled, but the psalm claims that the request of the king for similar blessings is granted. But this, again, is an exceptional passage, and there is little evidence to suggest that the immortality of the king was commonly accepted in Israel.

Two other famous texts are commonly adduced as evidence for immortality in exceptional cases. The NRSV translates Job 19:25–6 as follows: ‘For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God.’ The text, however, is notoriously corrupt and difficult. In view of Job’s frequent expressions of pessimism on the subject of death (e.g. 14:12: ‘if mortals die, will they live again?’), it is likely that he is expressing hope for vindication in this life rather than in the hereafter.

The poem about the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 is also problematic. The servant is allegedly cut off from the land of the living, and given a grave among the wicked (53:8–9). Yet, though his life is made an offering for sin, ‘he shall see his offspring and shall prolong his days’ (53:10). It is possible, then, to read this poem in terms of death and resurrection, and in fact it was often so read in ancient Judaism. The Servant does not necessarily die, however. It may suffice that he has been condemned to death and submitted to his fate. Moreover, it is not at all clear that the poem has an individual person in mind. While the interpretation is endlessly disputed, the most probable interpretation remains the collective one, whereby the Servant represents either Israel or the righteous remnant.³¹ In that case the language of death and resurrection is metaphorical, and this passage should be considered in conjunction with passages such as Ezekiel 37, which envision the resurrection of Israel as a people.

The most vivid example of resurrection language as a metaphor for the restoration of Israel is found in Ezekiel's vision of a valley full of dry bones. The vision implies familiarity with the concept of resurrection. In Zoroastrianism the bodies of the dead are exposed to be picked clean by the vultures, and this custom may have suggested the vision of dry bones.³² Ezekiel, however, is explicit in his interpretation: 'these bones are the whole house of Israel.' There is no question here of the resurrection of individuals. Hosea 6:2 ('After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him') is also clearly in the context of national restoration.³³ The speakers are stricken but not dead. A more difficult case is provided by Isaiah 26:19: 'Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!' Many scholars understand this passage as an affirmation of the resurrection of individuals, in the context of national restoration.³⁴ The context, however, is entirely concerned with the restoration of the people. 'Thy dead' are contrasted with 'other lords' who have ruled over Israel. They are dead and shall not live; shades (*Rephaim*) do not rise. In contrast, the Lord has increased the nation and enlarged the borders of the land (26:14–15). The passage, then, should most probably be interpreted as analogous to Ezekiel 37. Its language, however, would have a profound influence on the subsequent development of belief in resurrection.³⁵

Isaiah 26 is part of the so-called 'Apocalypse of Isaiah' (Isaiah 24–7), written early in the Second Temple period. It contains one other passage that is relevant to our discussion of death and afterlife. In Isaiah 25:6–10 we are told that God will make a great feast 'on this mountain' (Zion) and that 'he will swallow up death forever.' The language evokes the old Canaanite myth, where Mot (Death) swallows Baal. The figure of Death here is a powerful symbol for 'the shroud that is cast over all peoples.' The promise is that life will be transformed and Death will be no more. The removal of the threat of death does not require that the dead be raised, but it does imply a hope for an immortal state in the future. This hope, however, should not be pressed in too literal a fashion in the context of the early Second Temple period. Another passage in the book of Isaiah, from roughly the same period, envisions a new heaven and a new earth. In this new creation there will no longer be 'an infant who lives but a few days or an old man who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered cursed' (Isa 65:20). In the new creation people will still be mortal, even if the length of life is greatly expanded.

THE EARLY APOCALYPSES

The first clear evidence of belief in a differentiated life after death in Jewish sources appears in the apocalyptic literature of the Hellenistic period. The Book of the Watchers (1 *Enoch* 1–36) tells the story of the fallen angels. Enoch ascends to heaven to intercede for them, and then he is given a tour of the ends of the earth. In [chapter 22](#) he is shown 'a large and high mountain, and a hard rock and four beautiful places, and inside it was deep and wide and very smooth' (22:2). The angel Raphael informs him that 'these beautiful places are intended for this, that the spirits, the souls of the dead, might be gathered into them,' to await the judgement. The text

is unfortunately corrupt, and subsequently speaks of three places rather than four. The souls of the righteous are kept apart, with a spring of water on which there is light (22:9). 'Likewise, a place has been created for sinners when they die and are buried in the earth and judgement has not come upon them during their life.' The third place is prepared for the souls of those who complain and give information about their destruction, when they were killed in the days of the sinners. Finally, another place is prepared for sinners 'accomplished in wrongdoing' (22:13). We are told that 'their souls will not be killed on the day of judgment nor will they rise from there.'

This is the oldest passage in Jewish literature that attempts to distinguish the lot of righteous and wicked in the afterlife. It is a rather eccentric passage. Its views are never repeated in other Jewish literature. It seems to be influenced by various traditions.³⁶ The location of these chambers inside a mountain recalls the Epic of Gilgamesh, where Gilgamesh has to enter the base of a mountain to reach the Netherworld. The spring of water with a light on it is an Orphic motif. Both the Greeks and the Persians, the main cultures that the Jews encountered in the Second Temple period, had well-developed mythologies of life after death, as had the Egyptians.³⁷ It is not surprising that such beliefs also appealed to the Jews as a solution to the problem of theodicy, or the gap between divine justice and the flagrant injustice on earth.

Other formulations of the belief in judgment of the dead appear in other sections of *1 Enoch*.³⁸ In some cases, resurrection comes as a public event at the climax of history. The Animal Apocalypse (*1 Enoch* 85–90) promises that at the judgment at the end of history all those who have been destroyed and scattered will be gathered in (90: 33). The Epistle of Enoch says that 'the righteous will rise from sleep and wisdom will rise and will be given to them' (91:10). In other cases, the emphasis is on the transformation of the individual, and the place in the historical sequence is less important. *1 Enoch* 104, also in the Epistle tells the righteous to be hopeful, because: 'you will shine like the lights of heaven and will be seen, and the gate of heaven will be opened to you . . . be hopeful, and do not abandon your hope, for you will have great joy like the angels of heaven . . . for you shall be associates of the host of heaven.'³⁹ A very similar concept is found in Daniel 12, as the climax of a historical sequence:

At that time your people will be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dusty earth will awake, some to everlasting life and some to reproach and everlasting disgrace. The wise will shine like the splendor of the firmament and those who lead the common people to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

As is clear from the parallel in *1 Enoch*, to shine like the stars is to become a companion of the host of heaven.⁴⁰ The language, however, carries overtones of the idea of astral immortality that was widespread in the Greco-Roman world.⁴¹

As we have seen, prior to the Hellenistic age only exceptional individuals were believed to be elevated to the angelic or heavenly realm. The notion that such a destiny could be attained by the righteous as a group was novel in this period. In

the book of Daniel this belief is brought to bear directly on the problem of theodicy. The wise (חֲכִילִים) are the leaders of the spiritual resistance to the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. (They do not seem to have supported the military resistance of the Maccabees.) Some of them, we are told, fall (die), 'to refine and purify and make them white, until the time of the end' (Dan 11:35). But in the resurrection they are vindicated, when they are elevated to shine like the stars. The deaths of the martyrs in the time of persecution must have created a situation of considerable cognitive dissonance in ancient Judaism. Traditionally, people were supposed to be rewarded for keeping the law, and the reward was long life and seeing one's children's children. During the persecution, however, those who kept the law were killed, while violators prospered. The book of Daniel addressed that situation by assuring its readers that this life is not the end. The faithful could afford to lose their lives in this world if they believed that they would be elevated to join the angels in heaven. In the Epistle of Enoch the dynamic is similar although the situation envisaged is not one of persecution, but simply of social injustice. The injustice of the present will be set right in the judgment. Interestingly enough, this is also the situation envisioned in Psalms 49 and 73: 'Why should I fear in times of trouble when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me, those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches?' (Ps 49:5–6).

While the belief in reward and punishment after death was obviously relevant to times of persecution, it did not necessarily arise as a response to such situations. The Book of the Watchers, arguably the oldest section of *1 Enoch*, does not envision a persecution, although it does depict a situation where the world is out of joint, because of the excesses of the fallen angels and their offspring: 'and the world was changed, and there was great impiety and much fornication and they went astray and all their ways became corrupt' (*1 Enoch* 8:2). Many scholars think that the changes wrought by the watchers serve as an allegory for the changes brought about by Hellenistic culture in the Near East. The author of the Book of the Watchers recoils from these changes in horror. The clash in value systems is vividly expressed when Enoch ascends to heaven to present the petition of the Watchers. The petition is rebuffed:

Go say to the Watchers of heaven who sent you to petition on their behalf, you ought to petition on behalf of men, not men on behalf of you. Why have you left the high, holy and eternal heaven, and lain with the women and became unclean with the daughters of men and taken wives for yourselves and done as the sons of the earth and begotten giant sons? And you were spiritual, holy, living an eternal life, but you became unclean upon the women . . . as they do who die and are destroyed. And for this reason I gave them wives, namely that they might sow seed in them and that children might be born by them and thus deeds might be done on earth. But you formerly were spiritual, living an eternal immortal life for all the generations of the world. For this reason I did not arrange wives for you because the dwelling of the spiritual ones is in heaven. (*1 Enoch* 15:2–7)

What is at issue here is the contrast between the spiritual, heavenly, imperishable world and the world of corruption and death. The Watchers sinned because they

abandoned the spiritual world for the attractions of flesh. Conversely, Enoch becomes the paradigmatic human being by ascending to heaven and becoming like the angels. His transformation is inchoate in the Book of the Watchers but is developed at length in later tradition. In the Similitudes of Enoch, which were probably written in the early first century CE, Enoch ascends to heaven and is greeted by an angel who tells him: 'you are the son of man who has righteousness,' thereby assimilating him to the heavenly Son of Man who sits on a throne of glory (1 *Enoch* 71:14).⁴² In 2 *Enoch*, he is transformed into an angel (2 *Enoch* 22:10). His glorification reaches its zenith in 3 *Enoch* (*Sefer Hekalot*) where he is identified as Metatron, the lesser YHWH (3 *Enoch* 4; 9–12).⁴³ The exaltation of Enoch then takes on an exceptional character. But even in the Similitudes, he is representative of the righteous, who have 'their dwelling with the angels and their resting places with the holy ones' (1 *Enoch* 39:5). In Daniel, too, the goal of the righteous is to become like the angels, who are Daniel's constant interlocutors throughout his visions.

It has often been claimed that Jewish eschatology is distinguished from Greek by its emphasis on the resurrection of the body in contrast to the immortality of the soul, an emphasis that has obvious implications for the value attached to bodily activities, including sex. This distinction, however, is far too simple and fails to do justice to the kind of belief that emerges in the books of Daniel and *Enoch*. While this is not the Greek idea of immortality of the soul, neither is it resurrection of the body.⁴⁴ It might better be described as resurrection of the spirit, the exaltation of the *nepeš* from the Netherworld to the heavenly regions. In the formulation of *Jubilees* 23: 'their bodies shall rest in the earth and their spirits shall have much joy.' The spiritual nature of the afterlife is underlined in the Book of the Watchers, in contrast to the earthly life of corruptible flesh and sexuality. While Jewish tradition generally had a robust appreciation of earthly life, including marriage, the Levitical tradition associated bodily functions, including sex, with impurity. We find here the elements of a spirituality vastly different from that expressed in Deuteronomy or the biblical wisdom books. The ultimate goal of life has been changed from prosperity in the land and the succession of generations to a spiritual form of existence beyond the grave.

The idea of bodily resurrection is also attested in Judaism, beginning in the second century BCE. The brothers in 2 Maccabees 7 taunt their torturers, in full confidence that their limbs will be restored in the resurrection. (It should be noted that 2 Maccabees was written in Greek, adapted from the work of a Diaspora Jew, Jason of Cyrene.) The *Pseudo-Ezekiel* text from Qumran (4Q385) interprets Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones in terms of actual resurrection, which is, accordingly, physical in nature. Ezekiel 37 also underlies a prophecy of bodily resurrection in *Sibylline Oracles* 4, another Greek text from the Diaspora. Bodily resurrection was one of several ways in which the afterlife might be imagined. It was in no sense normative or standard in ancient Judaism.

The apocalyptic idea of resurrection that we have seen in the books of Daniel and *Enoch* was adapted in various ways in other bodies of literature.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

The people who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls were certainly familiar with the idea of resurrection. They preserved multiple copies of the books of Daniel and *Enoch*. There are also clear references to resurrection in 4Q385 (*Pseudo-Ezekiel*), in a paraphrase of Ezekiel 37, and in 4Q521 (the so-called *Messianic Apocalypse*), which lists the raising of the dead among the wonderful works of the end-time, and refers to God as 'the one who gives life to the dead of his people.' These texts, however, are not necessarily sectarian products; they may simply be part of the community library like the books of Daniel and *Enoch*. There is a long-standing controversy about the sect's own understanding of resurrection and life after death.⁴⁵

In part this controversy is fueled by conflicting accounts of the beliefs of the Essenes, who are widely believed to be identical with the Dead Sea sect. Josephus, who apparently relied on a Greek ethnographic source, wrote:

It is a firm belief among them that although bodies are corruptible, and their matter unstable, souls are immortal and endure for ever; that, come from the subtlest ether, they are entwined with the bodies which serve them as prisons, drawn down as they are by some physical spell; but that when they are freed from the bonds of the flesh, liberated, so to speak, from long slavery, then they rejoice and rise up to the heavenly world. Agreeing with the sons of the Greeks, they declare that an abode is reserved beyond the Ocean for the souls of the just; a place oppressed neither by rain nor snow nor torrid heat, but always refreshed by the gentle breeze blowing from the Ocean. But they relegate evil souls to a dark pit shaken by storms, full of unending chastisement. The Greeks, I think, had the same idea when they assigned their valiant ones, whom they call 'heroes' and 'demi-gods,' to the Islands of the Blessed, and the souls of the bad to Hades, the place of the wicked . . .⁴⁶

Josephus, or his source, is clearly at pains to emphasize the similarity between the beliefs of the Essenes and those of the Greeks, but even if we allow for some exaggeration, he paints a clear picture of a belief in immortality that did not require bodily resurrection. A quite different account is given by Hippolytus:

The doctrine of the resurrection has also derived support among them, for they acknowledge both that the flesh will rise again and that it will be immortal, in the same manner as the soul is already imperishable. They maintain that when the soul has been separated from the body, it is now borne into one place, which is well ventilated and full of light, and there it rests until judgement. This locality the Greeks were acquainted with by hearsay, calling it Isles of the Blessed.⁴⁷

Hippolytus probably drew on the same source as Josephus, not on Josephus directly. His account is sometimes confused or distorted. He identifies the Essenes with the Zealots and he eliminates reference to sun worship. His claim that the Essenes believed in a final conflagration of the universe, however, finds support in

1QH 11:29–36, and some scholars have argued that he also gives the more accurate account of the belief in afterlife. Emile Puech has offered the most thorough defence of the belief in bodily resurrection in the Scrolls,⁴⁸ but the evidence remains ambiguous at best.

There is no doubt that the sect firmly believed in reward and punishment after death. According to the *Community Rule*, the visitation of those who walk in the spirit of light ‘will be for healing, plentiful peace in a long life, fruitful offspring with all everlasting blessings, eternal enjoyment with endless life, and a crown of glory with majestic raiment in eternal light’ (1QS 4:6–8). Conversely, those who walk in the spirit of darkness are destined for ‘a glut of punishments at the hands of all the angels of destruction, for eternal damnation for the scorching wrath of the God of revenge, for permanent error and shame without end with the humiliation of destruction by the fire of the dark regions’ (1QS 4:11–14).⁴⁹ A quite similar formulation is found in the *Damascus Document*, column 2. These passages can be reconciled rather easily with Josephus’s account of the Essenes. They do not require a belief in bodily resurrection. The debate about that belief has centered mainly on a couple of texts from the *Hodayot*, or *Thanksgiving Hymns*.

1QH 19:10–14 thanks God ‘because you have done wonders with dust, and have acted very mightily with a creature of clay.’ The hymn goes on to say:

for your glory, you have purified man from sin so that he can make himself holy for you from every impure abomination and blameworthy iniquity, to become united with the sons of your truth and in a lot with your holy ones, to raise from the dust the worm of the dead to an [everlasting] community.

The phrase ‘worm of dead ones’ (תולעת מתים) also occurs in 1QH 14:34: ‘Hoist a banner, you who lie in the dust; raise a standard, worm of dead ones.’ There is an allusion here to Isaiah 26:19, which refers to those who dwell in the dust, but also to Isaiah 41:14, ‘do not fear, worm of Jacob, men of Israel.’ (The word for ‘men’ here is מְתִי, a rare word that only occurs in the construct and has the same consonants as the word for ‘dead ones.’) It may be that Isaiah 41 was understood at Qumran to refer to dead ones, and that there is a reference to resurrection here. It is also possible, however, that the phrase refers metaphorically to abject human nature, and that the point is exaltation rather than resurrection.

Another motif in the passage from 1QH 19 just cited is more characteristic of the hope of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The hymnist claims to be raised up ‘to become united with the sons of your truth and in a lot with your holy ones.’ Similarly in 1QH 3:19–23 he claims to have taken his place with the lot of the holy ones and entered into communion with the congregation of the sons of heaven. The goal here is fellowship with the angels, as it also was in *Enoch* and *Daniel*. The difference is that the hymnist at Qumran claims to enjoy in the present the fellowship that was promised to the righteous after death in the apocalypses. The members of the community believed that they had already made the essential transition to the angelic life. Consequently, future resurrection was not so important. Josephus certainly distorted this belief when he assimilated it to the Greek idea of immortality, but he was correct in placing the emphasis on immortality rather than on resurrection.

The Qumran community buried its dead in individual graves, with the head to the south and the feet to the north.⁵⁰ There were no family tombs, a fact that lends support to the view that the lifestyle was celibate. (Celibacy was alien to rabbinic Judaism, but it is quite intelligible in view of the aspiration to an angelic lifestyle; compare the passage from *1 Enoch* 15 cited above.) J. T. Milik argued that Paradise was believed to be in the north (cf. the importance of Mount Zaphon, the mountain of the north, in the Hebrew Bible, Ps 48:3; Isa 14:13).⁵¹ The Essenes were buried this way so that they would rise facing north and march directly to Paradise. We have no reliable information, however, as to where the Essenes imagined Paradise. In the Book of the Watchers, the abode of the dead is in the west (*1 Enoch* 22), but the Garden of Righteousness is 'far away to the east' (*1 Enoch* 32). Later apocalypses located Paradise in the third heaven. Even if the dead were buried facing towards Paradise, however, this would not necessarily imply a belief in bodily resurrection.

The immortality of the soul

The apocalyptic idea of angelic afterlife was adapted in another way in the Hellenistic Diaspora. The Wisdom of Solomon, written in Alexandria early in the Roman era, is clearly acquainted with apocalyptic judgment scenes.⁵² The wicked, who have denied that there is any reward or punishment after death, are astounded when they see the righteous exalted: 'We thought that their lives were madness and that their end was without honor. Why have they been numbered among the children of God? And why is their lot among the holy ones?' (Wis 5:4–5). The 'children of God' and the 'holy ones' are the angels. But while Wisdom uses the apocalyptic judgment scene as a rhetorical device, it actually subscribes to a Greek idea of immortality, informed by the Platonic tradition.⁵³ God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity (Wis 2:23). The soul, then, is created immortal. In this life, 'a perishable body weighs down the soul' (9:15) but the soul that is devoted to wisdom can gain immortality. There is no question here of resurrection of the body. This essentially Platonic idea of the immortal soul was shared by philosophically sophisticated Jews, such as Philo of Alexandria.⁵⁴ It would have enormous influence on Christianity, through the writings of the Church Fathers. It was very much a minority view in ancient Judaism, however, and plays no role in the New Testament. It was, then, a marginal, although ultimately very important, factor in 'the biblical world.'

It should be noted that not all Diaspora Judaism shared the philosophical refinement of Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon. The main collections of Jewish *Sibylline Oracles* from Egypt, Books 3 and 5, do not address the question of afterlife. *Sibylline Oracles* Book 4, which seems to be of different provenance from the other books, predicts resurrection in very physical terms (*Sib Or* 4:181–2). *The Sayings of Pseudo-Phocylides*, which are of uncertain provenance but are usually located in Egypt, caution against disturbing graves:

for we hope that the remains of the departed will soon come to the light again out of the earth. And afterwards they become gods. For the souls remain unharmed in the deceased. For the spirit is a loan from God to

mortals, and his image. For we have a body out of earth, and when afterwards we are resolved again into earth we are but dust; but the air has received our spirit (lines 103–8).

This passage seems to be a confused combination of ideas of immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body,⁵⁵ but may well be more representative of popular belief than Philo or Wisdom.

Beliefs around the turn of the era

It is difficult to say how widely accepted ideas of reward and punishment after death were in Judaism around the turn of the era. The famous skepticism of Qoheleth (Qoh 3:21: ‘Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?’) may already be a reaction to the ideas of immortality presented in the early apocalypses. The Pharisees allegedly accepted belief in resurrection;⁵⁶ the Sadducees did not. The evidence of Jewish epitaphs in this period is ambiguous.⁵⁷ There are occasional indications of belief in a meaningful afterlife. The epitaph of a woman at Leontopolis in Egypt says that ‘her soul flew to the holy ones.’ An inscription from Corycos in Cilicia says that God has placed us in the sphere of the planets, a probable allusion to astral immortality. One epitaph almost humorously wishes the deceased ‘good luck with your resurrection!’ (εὐτυχὸς τη ψυχῶν ἀναστήσῃ). A few centuries later, belief in resurrection is well attested in the epitaphs from Beth Shearim. The majority of epitaphs from the turn of the era, however, wish the dead person peace (שלום, εὐλογίη *pax*). Many of these inscriptions are difficult to date, and it is difficult to know what peace in the hereafter entails.

By the end of the first century there is evidence of more systematic reflection on the fate of the individual after death. In the apocalypse of *4 Ezra*, written towards the end of the first century CE, an angel assures Ezra that after the messianic age the world will be turned back to primeval silence for seven days. Then it will be roused again, and ‘that which is corruptible shall perish. And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the dust those who dwell silently in it; and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them’ (*4 Ezra* 7:30–3). Then follow judgment and recompense. ‘Then the pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the paradise of delight’ (7:36). Ezra asks about the interval, ‘whether after death, as soon as every one of us yields up his soul, we shall be kept in rest until those times come when thou wilt renew the creation, or whether we shall be tormented at once’ (7:75). He is told that the souls of the unrighteous do not immediately enter into habitations, but wander grieving in torments, because they realize the error of their ways. The righteous immediately see the glory of God and rejoice. Their face is to shine like the sun, and they are to be made like the light of the stars. There will no longer be any intercession on the day of judgment, but everyone is judged on his or her own merits.

The roughly contemporary apocalypse of 2 *Baruch* shows similar attention to detail. Here Baruch asks the Lord, ‘in what will those live who live in thy day, and what will they look like afterwards?’ (2 *Bar* 49:2). He is told:

the earth will certainly then restore the dead it now receives so as to preserve them: it will make no change in their form, but as it has received them, so it will restore them, and as I delivered them to it, so also will it raise them. for those who are still alive must be shown that the dead have come to life again, and that those who had departed have returned (2 *Bar* 50:2–3).

After the judgment, however, appearances will be changed. ‘The appearance of the evil-doers will go from bad to worse, as they suffer torment’ (51:2), but the righteous ‘will assume a luminous beauty so that they may be able to attain and enter the world which does not die, which has been promised to them’ (51:3). ‘Time will no longer age them, for in the heights of the world shall they dwell, and they shall be made like the angels and be made equal to the stars’ (51:10).

These apocalypses stand in the tradition of Daniel, in so far as there is a general resurrection at the end of history, and the righteous are eventually transformed to shine like the stars. But they have given thought to some of the problems involved. At this point what is envisioned is a bodily resurrection, but the body is then transformed into an angelic state.

Other apocalypses from the same period ignore the general resurrection and take the form of ascents of the visionary through the heavens.⁵⁸ In 3 *Baruch*, the abode of righteous souls is apparently in the fourth heaven,⁵⁹ while sinners, such as those who built the tower of Babel, are punished in the second. *Second Enoch* locates Paradise in the third heaven, but there is also a place of torment in the northern part of the same heaven (chs 8–9). These apocalypses are remarkable for the fact that both Paradise and the places of judgment are located in the heavens. In some apocalypses of this type, however, the location of the place of punishment is not specified (e.g., the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*). Tours of this sort are very popular in Christian apocalypses from the second century CE onward, and the punishments of the damned become a subject of great fascination.⁶⁰

Belief in reward and punishment after death did not necessarily make death more welcome, even for the righteous. The *Testament of Abraham*, written in Egypt in the late first or early second century CE, says that when it was time for Abraham to die, God dispatched the angel Michael to fetch him. But Michael cannot bring himself to break the news, and when Abraham finally learns it, he is reluctant to go. So Abraham is given a tour of the heavens, and allowed to witness the judgment of the dead. In the end, God sends Death in disguise, but this fails to deceive Abraham. Finally God has to draw out his soul as if in a dream. This text is part tale, part apocalypse, but it is exceptional in the literature of ancient Judaism for its ironic appreciation of human reluctance in face of death.⁶¹

EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Resurrection and judgment play a much more central role in early Christianity than they had in ancient Judaism. Christianity was based on the conviction that God had raised Jesus from the dead and elevated him to heaven, as Christ (*Messiah*) and Son of God. The earliest discussion of the role of the resurrection in the new faith is that of St Paul in 1 Corinthians 15.

St Paul

This account shows some of the same concerns that we have seen in 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch* and can only be understood in the context of Jewish apocalypticism as it had developed from the Hellenistic period.⁶² Paul begins by affirming the Christian belief that Christ died, was buried, and was raised on the third day, after which he appeared to many people, including Paul himself. Given this belief, asks Paul, 'how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised' (1 Cor 15:11–13). The denial of the resurrection has been explained in various ways.⁶³ One possibility is that the Corinthians had a form of realized eschatology, whereby they thought they had already passed from death to life. We have seen such an idea in the Dead Sea Scrolls; it also appears in the Gospel of John and is characteristic of Gnostic writings some centuries later. Alternatively, and perhaps more plausibly, they may have had a 'Hellenistic anthropology' similar to the Wisdom of Solomon's, with a belief in the immortality of the individual soul but not in a general public resurrection at the end of history, which was an idea without precedent in Greek thought. In that case they would have understood the resurrection of Jesus in terms of his exaltation after death. It is probable that there was some misunderstanding between Paul and his addressees and that they did not so much deny the resurrection as understand it differently.

For Paul, the resurrection of an individual (Jesus) is unintelligible apart from the expectation of general resurrection. Christ is 'the first fruits of those who have died' (1 Cor 15:20); if he is risen the general resurrection must be underway. Paul believed that it would be fulfilled within his own generation: 'we will not all die, but we will all be changed' (1 Cor 15:51). He tells the Thessalonians: 'the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air' (1 Thess 4:16–17). The imminence of this climactic moment is invoked repeatedly to lend urgency to Paul's message.

Like 2 *Baruch*, Paul entertains the question of the kind of body with which the dead are raised (1 Cor 15:35–57). He responds by the analogy of sowing: 'what you sow does not come to life unless it dies . . . you do not sow the body that is to be but a bare seed . . . but God gives it a body . . .' He goes on to explain that there are different kinds of bodies, human and animal, earthly and heavenly. In the case of the resurrection, 'what is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable . . . it is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.' Lest anyone miss the point, he concludes emphatically: 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.' Therefore even those who do not die before the Parousia must be changed, 'for this mortal perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality.'

It is clear from this discussion that what Paul envisions is neither resurrection of the body nor immortality of the soul. It is resurrection of the spiritual body, a concept close to what we found in the books of *Enoch* and Daniel, except that Paul elaborates the contrast between fleshly and spiritual, corruptible and incorruptible in a way that has overtones of Greek philosophy. Paul would not have been discomfited to learn that Jesus' skeleton had been found. This would be only the bare seed that was sown. It is clear, then, that his disagreement with the Corinthians was not due to a simple contrast between bodily resurrection and immortality, although Paul's concept of a spiritual body may have been as alien, and incomprehensible, to the Corinthians as physical resurrection.

The empty tomb

St Paul does not mention an empty tomb. Neither were there any stories about empty tombs in the case of the Maccabean martyrs. Whether even the (occupied) tombs of the righteous were the focus of much attention is disputed. In Matthew 23:29 Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for building the tombs of the prophets and adorning the monuments of the righteous. The saying is paralleled in Luke 11:47, and so belongs to the Q source, a relatively early stage of the Gospel tradition. The *Lives of the Prophets*, which gives copious information about the tombs of prophets, has sometimes been thought to reflect popular Jewish piety around the turn of the era,⁶⁴ but David Satran has argued strongly that it is a Byzantine Christian composition.⁶⁵ Tombs were very important in the cult of Greek heroes.⁶⁶ While little attention is paid to the tombs of heroes in the Hebrew Bible or in the literature of Second Temple Judaism, interest in such gravesites may have grown gradually in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

The story of the discovery of Jesus' empty tomb is told in all four Gospels, but with significant differences in detail.⁶⁷ Further elaborations of the story are found in later, apocryphal, gospels. (In *The Gospel of Peter*, the stone rolls itself away.) The basic story may have been invented to explain, in narrative form, how the resurrection must have happened. In Greek tradition there were numerous examples of the translation of human beings to the immortal realm. Such people were sometimes said to 'become invisible,'⁶⁸ and Josephus uses this terminology for the translation of Enoch and Elijah.⁶⁹ Pausanias tells the story of one Kleomedes, who killed his opponent in a boxing match, and was disqualified. In his anger he further caused the death of some boys. Finally, he fled to a temple and hid in a chest. When his pursuers opened the chest, he had disappeared. An oracle proclaimed that he had become a hero.⁷⁰ Herodotus (4.14) tells the story of a poet and wonder-worker named Aristaeas who died in a fuller's shop. The fuller shut up the shop and went to notify the relatives, but when they came Aristaeas had disappeared. He appeared elsewhere seven years later and made a poem, but then disappeared again.⁷¹ In the early imperial period, there are several reports of sworn testimony that people had seen a dead emperor (Augustus) or member of the imperial household (the mother and sister of Caligula) ascending to heaven.⁷² While none of these stories provides a close parallel to the resurrection narratives, they come closer than anything in biblical or Jewish tradition. In short, the stories of the empty tomb should be seen in the context of

Greek and Roman accounts of translation.⁷³ The declaration of the angel in Mark 14:6 that ‘he is not here,’ however, would seem to discourage a hero-like cult at the tomb. The Gospel of John provides the most interesting reflections on the resurrection body of Jesus, which is verifiably physical but nonetheless can enter a room where all the doors are closed (John 20:24–9).

The general resurrection

The Gospel of Matthew claims that when Jesus was crucified ‘the tombs also were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After this resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many’ (Matt 28:52–3). We are not told whether their resurrection was final, or only a temporary furlough. In general, in the New Testament, people other than Jesus must wait for the general resurrection. In the book of Revelation, John of Patmos sees under the altar ‘the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they had given.’ They cried out to the Lord: ‘How long will it be before you avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?’ (Rev 6:9–11). While these souls seem not yet to be at rest, a great multitude of others stand before the throne, clothed in white, holding palm branches (7:9; cf. 14:1–5). Revelation, however, also awaits a more public vindication of the elect. ‘Those who had been beheaded for their testimony’ are singled out for special honor: ‘They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended’ (Rev 20:5–6). Then follow the great judgment, and Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire.

Not all forms of early Christianity were oriented to the final resurrection to the same degree as the book of Revelation. The Gospel of John proclaims that ‘the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God . . . and will come out – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation’ (John 5:25–9). It also affirms that the believer ‘has already passed from death to life’ (5:24). There is an analogy here with the Dead Sea Scrolls, where the community believed that it was already living with the angels. This kind of realized eschatology finds its most developed form in the Gnostic writings from Nag Hammadi, several centuries later. In the words of the *Gospel of Philip*: ‘Those who say: “First one will die and (then) rise” are wrong. If men do not first experience the resurrection while they are alive, they will not receive anything when they die.’⁷⁴

The most typical belief about death in early Christianity, however, is that the soul goes to its reward or punishment immediately after death. For philosophically sophisticated Christians like Clement of Alexandria, this was conceived in terms of immortality of the soul. Popular Christianity is probably more accurately reflected in the multitude of apocalypses in the names of Peter, Paul, John, Mary, and so on, that flourish from the second century CE on.⁷⁵ Many of these take the form of other-worldly journeys, but even the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which does not describe such a journey, contains an extensive account of the places of punishment and a brief vision of Paradise. There were clear Jewish antecedents for these apocalypses that can be traced back to the Book of the Watchers in 1 *Enoch*, but they are also indebted to

the Orphic tradition, and are very much a product of Hellenistic–Roman syncretism. The world they imagine is very different from that of the Hebrew Bible, despite their indebtedness to postbiblical Jewish tradition.

NOTES

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- 2 Epic of Gilgamesh, Old Babylonian Version, tablet X, columns i and iii. S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (Oxford, 1989), 150.
- 3 Gilgamesh, Standard Version, VII, iv; Dalley, *Myths*, 89.
- 4 Dalley, *Myths*, 155.
- 5 'A Vision of the Netherworld,' trans. E. A. Speiser in J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, 1969), 110. See W. von Soden, 'Die Unterweltsvision eines assyrischen Kronprinzen,' in idem, *Aus Sprache, Geschichte und Religion Babyloniens: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Naples, 1989), 29–67.
- 6 There is some evidence for the deification of kings in ancient Sumer, K. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Kevelaer, 1986), 115.
- 7 KTU 1.5.II. 1–7. M. Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Philadelphia, 1978), 107.
- 8 B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead* (Tübingen, 1994), 62–7; C. L. L'Heureux, *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods: El, Ba'al and the Repha'im* (Missoula, 1979).
- 9 M. S. Smith, 'Rephaim,' *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, 1992), 5: 674–6; L'Heureux, *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods*; H. Rouillard, 'Rephaim,' in K. van der Toorn, B. Becking and P. W. van der Horst, eds, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden, 1995), 1308–24.
- 10 J. C. de Moor, 'Rāpi'ūma-Rephaim,' *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 88 (1976), 323–45.
- 11 Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, 91.
- 12 Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 161–96.
- 13 M. H. Pope, *Song of Songs* (New York, 1977), 210–29; 'The Cult of the Dead at Ugarit,' in G. D. Young, ed., *Ugarit in Retrospect* (Winona Lake, 1981), 159–79; Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 196–202.
- 14 T. J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit* (Atlanta, 1989), 80–94; 'Banqueting Hall/House,' *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, 1992), 1: 581–2.
- 15 Lewis, 'Banqueting Hall/House,' 582.
- 16 For the negative view, see Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, 62–7.
- 17 KAI 2.220–1. M. S. Smith and E. Bloch-Smith, 'Death and Afterlife in Ugarit and Israel,' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108 (1988), 279.
- 18 KTU 1.17.VI. 25–32. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 77–8.
- 19 1.17.VI. 33–40. Trans. Coogan, *Stories*, 37.
- 20 E. Bloch-Smith, *Judabite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead* (Sheffield, 1992), 137.
- 21 N. J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (Rome, 1969), *passim*.
- 22 R. Rosenberg, 'The Concept of Biblical Sheol within the Context of Ancient Near Eastern Beliefs,' unpublished dissertation, Harvard University, 1980. See T. J. Lewis, 'Dead, Abode of the,' *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, 1992), 2: 101–5.
- 23 Bloch-Smith, *Judabite Burial Practices*, 141. There was a well-established ritual of feeding and giving drink to the dead (*kispu*) in Mesopotamia. See J. Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* (Chicago, 1992), 282.
- 24 Ibid., 96–100.
- 25 So Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 174.

- 26 Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, 201–45.
- 27 For a full, recent review see E. Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la Vie Future: Immortalité, Résurrection, Vie Éternelle? I. La Résurrection des Morts et le Contexte Scripturaire* (Paris, 1993). See also J. J. Collins, *Daniel* (Minneapolis, 1993), 395–8.
- 28 G. von Rad, 'Life and Death in the OT,' in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1964), 2: 843–9.
- 29 For the positive assessment see Puech, *La Croyance*, 1:59–66; for the negative, B. Vawter, 'Intimations of Immortality and the Old Testament,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972), 158–71.
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- 33 F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Hosea* (Anchor Bible 24; New York, 1980), 420–1, argue that Hosea's admittedly metaphorical usage presupposes a belief in resurrection.
- 34 See Puech, *La Croyance*, 1:66–73.
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- 38 J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (Grand Rapids, 1998), 43–79.
- 39 G. W. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 112–29.
- 40 Collins, *Daniel*, 393–4.
- 41 P. Perkins, *Resurrection* (New York, 1984), 56–9. Already in the fifth century BCE, Aristophanes had joked about 'what people say, that when we die we straightaway turn to stars' (*Peace*, 832–4).
- 42 See Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 187–91.
- 43 M. Himmelfarb, 'Revelation and Rapture: The Transformation of the Visionary in the Ascent Apocalypses,' in J. J. Collins and J. H. Charlesworth, eds, *Mysteries and Revelations* (Sheffield, 1991), 82–4.
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- 48 Puech, *La Croyance*, vol. 2.
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- 57 P. W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs* (Kampen, 1991), 114–26.
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- 63 Holleman, *Resurrection*, 35–40.
- 64 J. Jeremias, *Heiligengräber in Jesu Umwelt* (Mt 23,29; Lk 11,47): *Eine Untersuchung zur Volksreligion der Zeit Jesu* (Göttingen, 1958).
- 65 D. Saran, *Biblical Prophets in Byzantine Palestine: Reassessing the Lives of the Prophets* (Leiden, 1995).
- 66 Rohde, *Psyche*, 121: ‘The worship of a hero is everywhere connected with the site of his grave.’
- 67 Perkins, *Resurrection*.
- 68 G. Lohfink, *Die Himmelfahrt Jesu* (Munich, 1971), 41.
- 69 *Antiquities* 9.28. C. Begg, ‘“Josephus’s Portrayal of the Disappearances of Enoch, Elijah and Moses”: Some Observations,’ *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (1990), 691–3.
- 70 Pausanias, 6.9.6–7. Rohde, *Psyche*, 129–30.
- 71 A. S. Pease, ‘Some Aspects of Invisibility,’ *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 53 (1942), 29.
- 72 Pease, ‘Some Aspects,’ 17.
- 73 A. Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Probing of Mark in Context* (Minneapolis, 1992), 141.
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CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

PURITY



Gordon Wenham

INTRODUCTION

Concepts such as holiness, purity and uncleanness are unfamiliar to modern Western readers of the Bible. We may sometimes use these terms, but we invest them with a quite different set of meanings from what they had in biblical culture. Our notions of purity tend to be based on scientific and medical understandings of the idea, whereas in the Bible these concepts are intensely theological and served to place powerful constraints on people's actions by setting boundaries of permissible behaviour.

The rules about purity and cleanness are clearly set out in the Old Testament, but penetrating the rationale behind them has proved much more difficult. However the introduction of anthropological methods of enquiry has shed much light on the biblical notions, for similar ideas of purity and uncleanness are found in many traditional societies and serve to define hierarchies, acceptable and unacceptable modes of behaviour, and even the boundaries of society itself. Societies of course have different sets of purity rules, so we cannot simply equate biblical ideas with those of other cultures, but the type of sociological analysis applied to tribal societies has proved very fruitful in understanding the Bible. Indeed it has highlighted some of its fundamental convictions about God, Israel, and ethics in the Old Testament, and clarified the social definition of the church in the New Testament.

In this chapter I shall review first the data from the Old Testament and then discuss the rationale behind these regulations. Then I shall do the same for early Jewish texts and the New Testament. Inevitably there are differences about the interpretation of these texts, to which attention will be drawn, but I shall focus on the most likely approach endorsed by a majority of scholars.

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN PARALLELS

Israel's neighbours, from Babylon in the East to Egypt and the Hittites in the West, had their own ideas about purity and uncleanness, about the people who might approach the gods and under what circumstances. Like Israel they had holy places and holy people, and were aware that sin and uncleanness were obstacles to worship. In Egypt purity was an indispensable prerequisite for worship. The temple, its vessels,

and the priests all had to be pure. Washing with water was the main means of purification. Pictures of coronations show water being poured over the king to endue him with new life. In Mesopotamia purity and holiness were also closely associated. Cult personnel and cultic objects are often described as pure, and again water is commonly used for purification. These provide interesting parallels to biblical ideas. However our knowledge of the practices of Israel's ancient neighbours is too limited to help much with understanding the Old Testament. No other ancient society's rules have been preserved as comprehensively as those found in the Pentateuch, and they must be treated as a coherent entity in themselves.

THE OLD TESTAMENT PICTURE

The Old Testament seems to envisage the distinction between clean and unclean being known from primeval times, for Noah was told to take into the ark seven pairs of every type of clean animal and one pair of each unclean animal. (Genesis 7:2–3). But the detailed regulations about purity are nearly all contained in the book of Leviticus, part of the laws given to Moses at Sinai (c. 1300 BC). Scholars generally hold that these laws were drafted in their present form by priests in post-exilic times (c. 500 BC) without necessarily supposing that they were invented then. Texts dealing with the time of David (1000 BC) seem to show awareness of the purity rules (e.g. 2 Samuel 11) as do some prophetic passages, and divine holiness is a key idea in both the Psalms and Isaiah. It is therefore very difficult to be dogmatic about the origin and date of these concepts. However it is clear that the Old Testament rules are much less developed than they became in later Judaism: one-sixth of the Mishnah (c. AD 200) is devoted to explaining the rules of cleanness. Happily for an understanding of the biblical purity system its date of origin is relatively unimportant.

The Old Testament purity system

According to Leviticus 10:10–11 it is the duty of the priests 'to distinguish between the holy and the common, between the clean and the unclean' and to teach the people about the differences. These fundamental categories of biblical thought are then expounded in the following chapters of Leviticus.

The key principle is that God is the supremely holy being, and anyone who wishes to come into his presence must be holy too. But uncleanness is a bar to holiness: indeed if any unholy person comes into contact with the holy, he will die, as Uzzah did when he touched the ark of the covenant (e.g. 2 Samuel 6: 6–7). Numbers 4 is concerned that if the Levites just see the ark, they may die. It is therefore of vital importance to know what constitutes uncleanness, which has a variety of causes and different degrees of severity. The basic idea is that the clean may enter God's presence in worship, but the unclean must not. Domesticated clean animals may be sacrificed, but others may not. Only 'clean' people, that is, those unpolluted by discharges or other problems, should enter the sanctuary to offer sacrifice. Leviticus 11–22 gives a full treatment of these issues.

Leviticus 11 classifies living creatures into clean and unclean. Clean may be eaten, and some of the clean creatures may be sacrificed, but unclean may not. Cud-chewing

animals with split hooves (e.g. cattle, sheep), are clean and may be eaten, but others (e.g. pigs, camels, rock badgers) are unclean. All birds are clean and edible apart from a list of twenty, whose identity is not always clear: as far as can be determined all these birds are birds of prey or were thought to live on carrion. Ordinary fishes with fins and scales are also clean, but other aquatic creatures, such as shellfish, are unclean. Locusts may also be eaten, but not other winged insects. 'Swarming things' such as mice or lizards are also unclean.

This sort of uncleanness is quite benign. It just means these creatures may not be eaten. Unclean creatures do not pollute unless they are dead. You do not become unclean by touching a live camel, for example. But all animals, whether clean or unclean when alive, when dead will make those who touch them unclean (Leviticus 11:28, 31, 39). Even more polluting are human corpses. So holy people like priests and Nazirites are forbidden to mourn for the dead, lest they make themselves unclean (Leviticus 21:1–12; Numbers 6:1–12). Laity who become unclean by touching a corpse remain so for a week and must undergo a special decontamination rite as prescribed in Numbers 19: failure to do so may lead to being 'cut off', that is, premature death.

Some bodily discharges also make people unclean. Mothers are polluted by the puerperal discharge for forty days after giving birth to a son, and for eighty days after bearing a daughter (Leviticus 12). Sexual intercourse pollutes both parties for a day, and menstruation makes a woman unclean for a week (Leviticus 15:18–19). Long-term discharges from the sexual organs make people unclean for as long as the discharge continues.

Skin diseases may also make a person unclean. Skin disease has often been mistranslated as leprosy. This cannot be what is meant, for leprosy (Hansen's disease) did not reach the Middle East till about the Christian era, nor is it spontaneously cured as some of these conditions are. Psoriasis or eczema could produce the symptoms described in Leviticus 13. It is the symptoms that determine whether a skin complaint is clean or not: active, sore, peeling conditions make a person unclean, whereas stable conditions, such as baldness or leukoderma, are classed as clean. Similar principles are applied to determine whether moulds or fungi (again called in Hebrew 'skin disease') affecting garments or houses are serious: if the mould is deep and spreading, it is unclean and the whole garment or house must be destroyed, but if it is static and superficial, it is pronounced clean and the garment or building is spared (Leviticus 13: 47–59; 14: 33–57). Anyone suffering from a polluting skin condition remains unclean until it clears up. In general short-term human uncleanness may be cleared by waiting a day and washing in water. When a condition causing long-term uncleanness, such as skin disease, clears up, the sufferer has also to offer a sacrifice to be ritually clean again (Leviticus 14).

Whereas the above naturally occurring conditions pollute the person involved and anyone he or she comes in contact with, some sins may cause a much more serious pollution: they pollute not just the sinner but the land and even the sanctuary itself. For example Leviticus 18 gives a long list of forbidden sexual relationships including incest, adultery, homosexuality and bestiality, which are said to pollute both those involved and the land (18:24–5). It was these practices that Leviticus says led to the previous inhabitants of Canaan being 'vomited out'. So it warns Israel that if they

Tolerated		Prohibited	
Non-sacrificial	Sacrificial	Unintentional	Intentional
e.g. menstruation	e.g. skin disease	e.g. forgotten cleansing	e.g. homicide, idolatry

Figure 46.1 Tolerated and prohibited moral uncleanness.

do the same, they may be exiled from the land or the offender will be cut off, that is, die by supernatural causes (18:25, 28–9). Idols and idolatry are also polluting. Worship of other gods, consulting the dead or possession of idols makes the perpetrators, the land, and the sanctuary unclean (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2–5; Ezekiel 20:7, 18). Homicide is another sin that pollutes the land (Numbers 35:33–4). The uncleanness caused by these sins is so serious that only the death of the sinner suffices to cleanse it.

These different types of uncleanness may be classified according to the severity of their effects. At the one extreme is the uncleanness that occurs naturally, which needs no cleansing, such as that associated with certain animals. Then come the uncleanness that can be dealt with simply by washing. More serious, but still natural, are the types of uncleanness associated with bodily discharges, which require the offering of sacrifice. Finally at the other extreme is the uncleanness generated by idolatry, homicide or illicit sex, which can only be countered by the death of the offender and the Day of Atonement ceremonies. Often the milder forms of uncleanness are classified as ritual, and the more serious as moral. However it is preferable to see them as forming a continuum (see [Figure 46.1](#)).

Purification rituals

The severity of uncleanness varies with the cause and determines what is the appropriate rite of purification. For example touching a live but unclean animal has no effect. Israelites simply have to refrain from eating them. But bodily discharges that are natural but short-term, such as menstruation and seminal emissions, have to be treated by washing and waiting till evening. However longer-term abnormal discharges from the genital organs or long-term skin diseases or the puerperal discharge require recovery from the condition, washing of the body and the person's clothes, and the offering of sacrifices. A layperson who comes into contact with a corpse is similarly unclean for a week, must wash himself twice and his clothes, and be sprinkled with water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer.

These types of uncleanness are tolerated, so long as the appropriate cleansing procedures are followed. But failure to undergo cleansing has grave consequences for the unclean and for the community. In this case the impurity threatens the sanctuary: like a deadly gas it enters the shrine and pollutes it, thus making it uncongenial for God to dwell there. Since the Old Testament views God's presence among Israel as the greatest boon of their status as the chosen people, to drive him away is disastrous and will bring the nation to ruin. Hence it is essential to carry

out purification rites, and if they are inadvertently omitted, to offer a purification offering as soon as the fault is realized, for inadvertent sins like this can be atoned for: one function of the purification offering is to cleanse the sanctuary.

More serious still is the uncleanness generated by three types of sin: idolatry, homicide, and illicit sexual acts pollute not only the sanctuary but also the land. The only way of cleansing the sanctuary is through the rituals on the Day of Atonement, which involve taking sacrificial blood into the innermost part of the shrine, the holy of holies, and then transferring the sins and impurities of the nation that have been stored in the sanctuary and carried by the high priest on to the scape-goat. Despatching this goat into the wilderness symbolically removes sin and impurity from the nation.

The purification offering and the Day of Atonement

Leviticus [chapter 4](#) deals with the sacrifice called the purification offering. This illustrates in a vivid way the importance of purity for ancient Israel and how uncleanness can affect the nation if it is not properly treated.

The main part of the ritual is similar to other sacrifices. The worshipper must bring the animal, bull, goat, lamb or pigeon, to the courtyard of the tabernacle. There he must lay his hand on the animal's head as a token of his identification with the animal, kill it, dismember it, and burn part of it on the altar. These features are common to all the sacrifices.

However with the purification offering something unusual is done with the blood. In other sacrifices the victim's blood is splashed on the main altar. In the purification offering the blood is carefully collected and then smeared or sprinkled on different parts of the sanctuary. The blood smearing purifies the item treated. Where the blood is smeared depends on the status of the offerer.

If a layperson has sinned the blood is smeared on the horns of the main courtyard altar, where the sacrifices are burned. (The horns of the altar are shaped like animal horns and attached to the top corners of the altar.) If however the high priest or the congregation of Israel, the assembly of adult males, has sinned, the blood is taken into the holy place. There it is smeared on the horns of the incense altar and sprinkled seven times before the curtain that hides the ark in the holy of holies. This suggests that the pollution generated by laypeople's unwitting sins affects the outer altar, whereas that produced by the high priest or the national assembly defiles the inner shrine.

Once a year on the day of atonement two sin offerings are offered and their blood taken into the holy of holies by the high priest to be sprinkled on and in front of the mercy seat or place of atonement (Leviticus 16). The mercy seat is the holiest place of all, where God himself is pictured as sitting shrouded in fire or smoke on the outstretched wings of two cherubim, which look like winged bulls or lions with human heads. To enter the holy of holies the high priest has to don special white vestments and surround himself with clouds of incense for fear that he might see God and die. That the high priest is expected to take such a risk shows how important it is that the sanctuary (see [Figure 46.2](#)) should be cleansed from impurity. If this is not done, it is feared that God will leave his sanctuary, which will entail

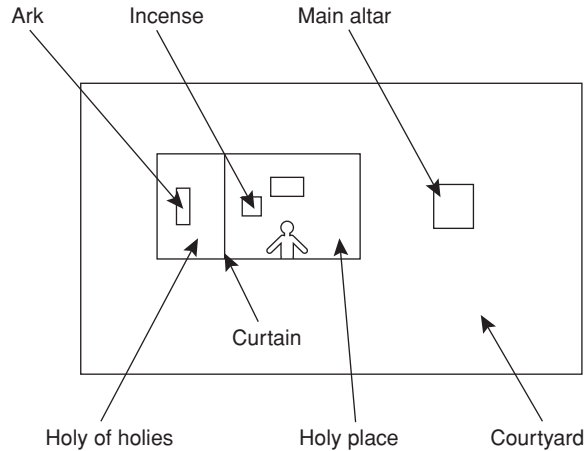


Figure 46.2 The tabernacle, or sanctuary.

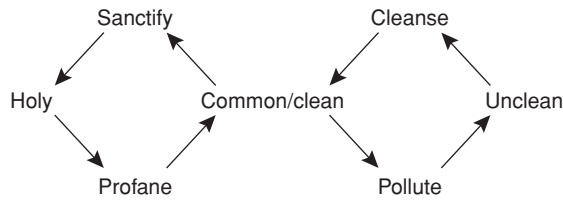
disaster befalling the nation. Ezekiel in fact pictures the cloud of God's presence taking off from the temple and this presages the eventual fall of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 8–11).

From these rules about the purification offering and the day of atonement it seems that different categories of offence produce different degrees of uncleanness. Or, more precisely, the more serious the offence the more deeply the impurity penetrates the sanctuary. Inadvertent offences by the laity merely pollute the altar in the outer courtyard. Inadvertent offences by the whole congregation or the high priest defile the holy place, so that to cleanse it the incense altar and curtain must be sprinkled with blood. But deliberate offences penetrate the holy of holies itself and require the mercy seat over the ark to be sprinkled if God is to continue to dwell among his people.

However the blood smearing and sprinkling do more than cleanse the different parts of the sanctuary, they make atonement for the offender so that his or her sin is forgiven. The application of the blood to the altars does not merely make them ritually clean, it secures the forgiveness of the sinner. This is made even clearer on the Day of Atonement, which deals with the most serious sins and the impurities associated with them. On this day the high priest enters the holy of holies and sprinkles blood there, but he also takes a goat, lays both his hands on its head, confesses all the transgressions and sins of the people of Israel, thus symbolically transferring them to the goat. The goat is then driven away into the wilderness to a solitary place to Azazel. This is the ritual of the scapegoat. It is uncertain what Azazel means, possibly 'complete destruction' or the name of a demon responsible for sin, but the fundamental idea is clear: through the Day of Atonement ceremonies the nation is purged of all its sin and associated impurity. Its sins are symbolically despatched to a desolate place so that they will not return to trouble the people.

Holiness

Before trying to clarify the biblical concepts of purity, it is necessary to look at its idea of holiness, for conceptually holiness and uncleanness are opposite ends of a spectrum in which purity comes in the middle. Persons or things are either holy or common, clean or unclean. It is possible to divide 'common' into two subcategories, 'clean' or 'unclean'. This sets up a sequence 'holy' – 'ordinary' – 'clean' or 'unclean'. In their natural state people or things are 'common'/'clean'. When they are given to God they are 'sanctified', that is, they become 'holy'. When they are spoiled in some way, holy things are 'profaned' and clean things 'polluted' (see [Figure 46.3](#)).



[Figure 46.3](#) 'Holy' – 'clean' – 'unclean' sequence.

Things that are intrinsically holy, such as God's name, are *profaned* when abused. Clean things, such as the human body, may be *polluted* by the unclean, for example blood, disease, or death. To reverse the process unclean things may be *cleansed* by waiting, washing, and sometimes offering a sacrifice. To *sanctify* something clean is more difficult: it usually involves an explicit command from God, sacrifice and anointing with oil.

Holiness is intrinsic to God's character and everything that belongs to him. Israel is frequently urged to 'Be holy, for I am holy.' God's name, which expresses his character, is holy, so to swear falsely or to resort to idolatry profanes his name. Anyone or anything given to God becomes holy. Thus the priests' portions of the sacrifices are holy, as are the tabernacle and its equipment. Those dedicated to the service of God, such as priests, Levites and Nazirites (the Old Testament equivalent of monks and nuns) are regarded as holy. In a more general sense the whole nation of Israel is set apart from other nations to serve God and is therefore described as holy.

But does holiness mean anything more than separation to God? What is it about God that makes him holy in himself? This is more difficult to answer. Mary Douglas (1966) suggests that holiness involves wholeness and completeness. This means that holy men like priests have to be free of deformity and physical handicap. Animals offered to God must be free of blemish. Holy behaviour involves moral integrity: thus theft, dishonesty, double-dealing and hypocrisy are all incompatible with holiness.

Though wholeness partially captures what the Old Testament means by holiness, it is more precisely encapsulated in the notion of full and perfect life. God is the source of life, and so holiness virtually equates to the life-giving power of God. The Garden of Eden is not only pictured as the place where God dwelt, but its verdant vegetation, four rivers and the tree of life all strengthen the association between

God, holiness and life. So in the laws about sacrifice and priests, it is not that blemishes and handicaps are somehow abnormal, but their lack of perfect life debars them from being of use in worship. Those who come into the presence of God must demonstrate they have perfect life.

Uncleanness

Once the association between holiness and life has been grasped, it becomes easier to see the principles being expressed through the laws on uncleanness outlined above. Fundamental is the contrast between holiness and uncleanness. God is the perfectly holy, whereas the unclean are those opposed to God, or who fall short of his perfection. Hence idolatry, which involves worshipping another god, is one of the most severe forms of uncleanness: it pollutes the idolater, the land and the sanctuary. But divine holiness does not merely demand total religious and moral commitment; it means life. God himself is full and perfect life, so that death is the very antithesis of holiness. Thus it is not surprising that homicide generates an intense form of uncleanness. Indeed other forms of uncleanness are very often associated with death. The Old Testament thus operates with the following polarities:

God——sin
life——death
holiness——uncleanness

The world and its contents are viewed as revolving around two poles, the holy God of life, and sin/death, the unclean. Israel, the people of God, is called to be holy, 'because I the LORD am holy' (Leviticus 20:26). This means shunning those sins that are the antithesis of holiness, such as idolatry, murder, and sexual immorality. Sexual congress is the most powerful and Godlike of all human powers, in that it enables man to be like God creating beings in his own image, but its misuse is viewed by the Old Testament as gravely as idolatry or homicide – *Corruptio optimi pessima* (the misuse of the best is the worst). But uncleanness also means avoiding the other conditions associated with death.

If the quintessence of uncleanness is death, it becomes clear why corpses are regarded as so polluting. Thus if Nazirites, the holiest laypeople in Israel, come unexpectedly in contact with the dead, their vow is invalidated and they must start the period under the Nazirite vow again (Numbers 6). Whereas the holiness of the Nazirite is temporary, that of the high priest is permanent and he must not even compromise it by going near his dead father or mother. Less serious uncleannesses may similarly be viewed as related to lack of life. Men or women suffering abnormal discharges from their sexual organs cannot generate new life, so they are unclean. This is probably the reason why menstruation and the puerperal discharge in women and seminal emissions in men are regarded as unclean: they are preventing or at least not leading to the procreation of new life. An apparent association with death can also explain why skin disease is viewed negatively. People suffering from serious skin diseases are not enjoying the fullness of life: part of their body seems to be

God				
life				death
holy				unclean
priests	handicapped priests	clean laity	unclean, e.g. skin-diseased	corpses
sacrificial animals	blemished sacrificial animals	clean animals	unclean animals	dead animals

Figure 46.4 Spectrum of conditions from holy to unclean.

rotting away, and they are therefore classified as unclean. Only the pure and clean may approach God. Thus handicapped priests may not officiate at the altar and blemished animals may not be sacrificed there, because they appear to lack perfect life, and therefore they may not enter God's presence. Similarly lay people affected by uncleanness, for example skin disease or discharge, are barred from worship and sometimes forced to live outside the community until they recover (Numbers 5:1–4; 2 Kings 7:3–4).

Thus there are degrees of uncleanness in biblical thinking. So rather than regard holy and unclean, life and death, as mutually exclusive categories, it is better to see a spectrum of conditions ranging from the very holy at one extreme to the very unclean at the other (see [Figure 46.4](#)).

Similar spectra may be drawn to show Israel's conception of space: from the holy of holies, God's dwelling place, at the centre of the tabernacle, the tabernacle courtyard, the camp, to the unclean area outside the camp.

These harsh regulations declared very loudly one aspect of God's character: he is life, perfect life, both morally and physically. He is opposed to death: those who willingly or even involuntarily embrace actions that lead to death separate themselves from God.

The food laws

Of the three key principles in the Jewish dietary laws, no consumption of blood, no mixing of meat and milk in the same meal, and the avoidance of certain foods altogether, only the last is spelled out in detail in the Old Testament. The ban on blood is mentioned immediately after the flood in Genesis 9:4, where the consumption of meat is first permitted with the proviso 'Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.' The later law in Leviticus 17 threatens anyone who does eat blood with 'cutting off', that is, premature death. For Deuteronomy to eat meat from which the blood has not been drained is incompatible with Israel's vocation to be a holy nation.

Once again the tie-up between holiness and life on the one hand and uncleanness and death on the other is apparent in the blood ban. Because blood represents the

life of the animal it is sacred; it belongs to God, therefore man should not consume it. Animals that die naturally have their lifeblood still in them, so are banned from consumption by the holy people of Israel. But foreigners who are not in this close relationship with God may eat the flesh of such carcasses.

Three times the law insists, 'You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk' (Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21), and this is the basis of the Jewish ban on eating meat and milk products at the same meal. The original circumstances of the ban are obscure. It is often surmised that it was a rejection of a Canaanite religious custom. It may also be relevant that goat's meat cooked in leben (a sort of yoghurt) is still enjoyed in the Middle East today. But neither observation explains why the Old Testament forbids it. It could be that like the blood ban it is inculcating respect for life. A kid should be living on its mother's milk not being cooked in it. Such a dish seems to subvert the natural order, and confuse the realms of life and death in an unacceptable way.

However the other food laws (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14) do not immediately seem to fit this understanding of uncleanness. It is not apparent, for example, why pigs and camels and crabs are unclean, whereas sheep, goats or salmon are classified as clean. The criterion that clean land animals must have cloven hooves and chew the cud is only another way of defining the classes clean and unclean: it does not explain why there should be different classes in the first place. The same may be said about the distinction between fish with scales and fins, which are clean, and other water creatures that are not. When it comes to the birds, Leviticus and Deuteronomy simply give a list of twenty hard-to-identify birds that are unclean and therefore may not be eaten, and declare the others clean.

Over the centuries various theories have been put forward to explain these food laws. The standard Jewish view is that the classification is arbitrary: they test obedience. Will you obey God's commands, even if you cannot understand his reasons? If people are willing to keep rules like this for which they can see no reason, it may be hoped that they will keep the moral law, which is clearly beneficial to society. This altruistic approach to law is commendable, but as an explanation it must be clearly a last resort, for it is an admission that the purpose of the law cannot be understood.

An approach that has been popular since the advance of modern medicine in the nineteenth century is that the food laws were given to promote health: pork, shell-fish, and so on, often carry disease. By forbidding Israel to eat such foods God was safeguarding their health. Though this fits well with the Old Testament picture of God as a deity very concerned about human welfare, there is nothing in the text to support this explanation. It is never stated that observing the food laws is good for your health, though motive clauses giving reasons for keeping particular laws are frequent elsewhere in the Pentateuch. At a pragmatic level, if the Israelites had discovered that eating pork might give one tapeworms, might they not also have discovered that thorough cooking kills them? Why are poisonous plants not banned? Indeed closer examination shows that some items classified as unclean are healthy foods, and some that are clean are problematic. A hygienic explanation also causes theological problems, at least for Christians. Why should Jesus according to Mark 7 have suggested the abrogation of the food laws, and the early church have implemented

it, if they contributed to health? Would the apostles have wanted church members to have eaten unhealthy foods?

Another scholarly explanation is that some of the unclean animals, for example pigs, were used in pagan worship. Israel was expected to shun any religious acts that smacked of syncretism or compromise. While pig bones apparently used in sacrifice have been found at Canaanite sites, it is certain that the Canaanites most frequently sacrificed sheep, goats and oxen, the same animals as in Israel. In particular the bull, the premier clean sacrificial beast in Israel, was also highly valued in Egyptian and Canaanite religion. This indicates that reaction to foreign practice does not explain these rules.

Anthropological explanations that see these food rules as both symbolic and social have more to commend them. These rules are symbolic, in expressing a society's self-understanding, and social, in that they tend to support the boundaries and hierarchies of that society. Mary Douglas has put forward several possible explanations of this type. In *Purity and Danger* (1966) she argued that wholeness, holiness and cleanness were closely related ideas in biblical thinking. As already noted above this is an important insight. She further observed that the mode of locomotion of different species seemed to be an important factor in whether or not they were classed as clean. Air, land, and sea all have an appropriate mode of motion associated with them. Birds have two wings with which to fly, and two feet for walking; fish have fins and scales with which to swim; land animals have hooves to run with. Animals that conformed to their type were clean and could be eaten, whereas anomalous creatures were classified as unclean. While this could explain some of the distinctions,

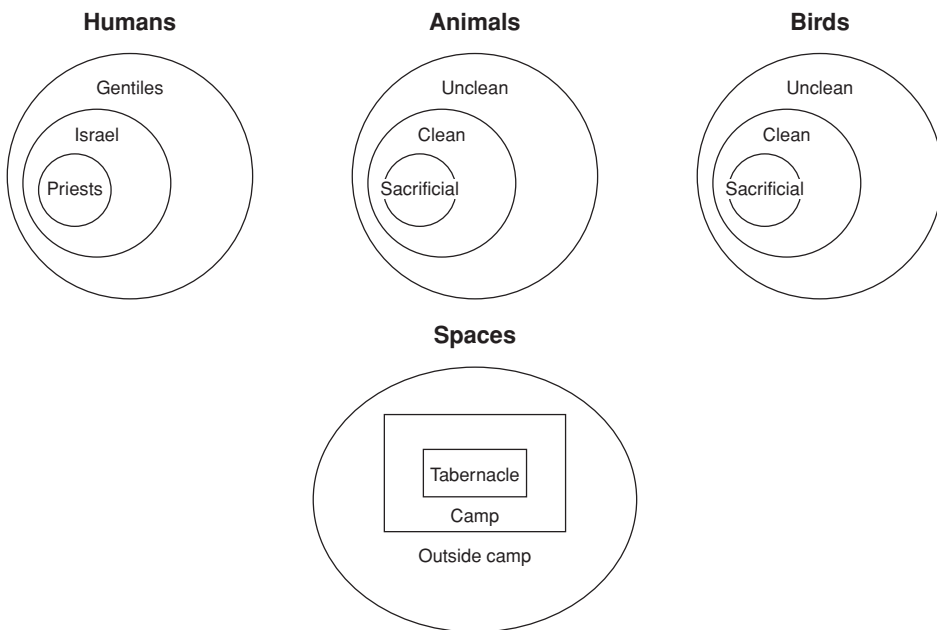


Figure 46.5 Cleanness rules relating to humans, animals and birds.

such as why snakes are unclean (they do not move in the right way for land animals), it hardly explains the finer distinctions, for example between a camel and a goat or between the birds.

She later noted in *Implicit Meanings* (1975) that the cleanness rules structure the human, animal and bird realms in a similar way. Both the realms of birds and beasts contain a mixture of clean and unclean species. The clean may be eaten, the unclean may not. Within the clean group there is a subgroup of animals or birds that may also be sacrificed, such as sheep or pigeons. This threefold division of the bird and animal kingdoms corresponds to the divisions among human beings (see [Figure 46.5](#)). Mankind falls into two main groups, Israel and the Gentiles. Within Israel only one group, the priests, may approach the altar to offer sacrifice. This in turn matches the law's understanding of sacred space. Outside the camp is the abode of Gentiles and unclean Israelites. Ordinary Israelites dwell in the camp, but only priests may approach the altar or enter the tabernacle tent.

These distinctions made in the food laws between clean and unclean foods thus match the divisions among Mankind, between Israel the elect nation and the non-elect Gentiles. They serve to remind Israel of her special status as God's chosen people. Just as God has selected just one people to be near him, so Israel has to be selective in her diet. Through this system of symbolic laws the Israelites are reminded at every meal of their redemption to be God's people. Their diet is limited to certain meats in imitation of their God, who has restricted his choice among the nations to Israel. It serves also to bring to mind Israel's responsibilities to be a holy nation. As they distinguish between clean and unclean foods, they are reminded that holiness is more than a matter of meat and drink, but a way of life characterized by purity and integrity.

The oldest Jewish explanation of these laws in the second-century BC *Letter of Aristeas* seems to endorse such a symbolic interpretation. The writer states that humans must behave like the clean birds that eat grain, not like the wild and carnivorous unclean birds. These regulations teach Israel to act 'with discrimination according to the standard of righteousness – more especially because we have been distinctly separated from the rest of mankind'.

These food laws not only reminded Israel of her distinctiveness, they served to enforce it. Jews faithful to these laws would tend to avoid Gentile company, lest they were offered unclean food to eat. This may partially explain the reluctance of Daniel and his friends when exiled in Babylon to eat the food provided by the royal court: they feared they might be defiled, so they insisted on eating only vegetables (cf. Daniel 1:8–16).

But if the general symbolic significance of the food laws has been clarified, can the specific reasons for assigning animals into one category or the other be discovered? Is the classification of pigs and shellfish as unclean purely arbitrary? The list of unclean birds (Leviticus 11:13–19; Deuteronomy 14:11–18) is suggestive. As far as these can be identified they are all birds of prey or were believed to feed on carrion. In other words they ate flesh with blood in, something forbidden to humans in Genesis 9, which insists all blood must be drained out of a creature before it may be eaten. Similarly sheep, goats and cattle are obviously vegetarian as well as being the most valuable possessions of pastoralists. One way of defining what sheep, goats

and cattle have in common is to say they all have cloven hooves and chew the cud. Anything that does not fit this definition, such as cats or dogs, donkeys, is unclean. Carnivorous animals obviously fall into this category, as well as some herbivorous ones. So once again blood-consuming animals are banned from human consumption, because they act in a way that humans should not.

It would have been possible to give a list of the commonest clean land animals, corresponding to the list of unclean birds as Deuteronomy 14:5 attempts: instead the Leviticus law prefers to give a definition that can be used to categorize any animal, whether it has cloven hooves and chews the cud. This allows the consumption of many wild animals caught in hunting, such as deer. However, wild animals do not come into the super-clean category of animals or birds that may be sacrificed. Sacrificial victims must fulfil all the criteria for cleanness and also be domesticated: to give an animal caught in a hunt is not allowed, probably for the reason stated by David in 2 Samuel 24:24: 'I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD which cost me nothing.' This also explains why the world of water creatures simply divides into clean and unclean: there is no sacrificial subset of sacrificial clean fish, because ancient Israel had no fish farms.

These food laws also fit into the broader framework of the uncleanness laws. If God is identified with life and holiness, and uncleanness is associated with death and opposition to God, the food laws symbolize that Israel is God's people called to enjoy his life, while Gentile idolaters are by and large opposed to him and his people and face death. The food laws also underline respect for life directly as well as symbolically. Eating meat is described as a concession in Genesis 9:1–4. And it may only be eaten if the blood is drained out first, 'for the life is . . . the blood' (Leviticus 17:11). Consumption of the life liquid, blood, is thus banned. Furthermore wanton slaughter of living creatures is also discouraged by the limited number of animals classified as clean. In both ways, then, these food laws tended to promote respect for life.

Clean/unclean in the prophets

Outside the Pentateuch the terms 'clean' and 'unclean' are much less common. That is not to say the prophets were not familiar with the ideas, though. The incompatibility of uncleanness with holiness and the danger of entering God's presence in worship if you are not clean is dramatically expressed by Isaiah in his call vision. He hears the seraphim calling, 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts', and he responds, 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!' (Isaiah 6:3–5).

But though the distinction between clean and unclean is well known to the prophets, they focus on the worst types of prohibited uncleanness attributable to human sin, not on tolerated types of uncleanness caused by bodily functions. Thus Hosea 5:3 accuses Israel of contracting uncleanness through unfaithfulness to the LORD, which he calls spiritual harlotry. Hosea 6: 7–10 associates uncleanness with murder and infidelity to the covenant. Isaiah 30:22 and Jeremiah 2:7, 7:30 declare that idolatry defiles the land and the sanctuary.

But it is the priest/prophet Ezekiel, brought up strictly to avoid uncleanness (4:14), who makes most of the concept in his condemnation of Israel. Though he knows the laws on naturally occurring uncleanness (44:25; cf. 22:26 alluding to Leviticus 10:10–11), he repeatedly focuses on the uncleanness caused by Israel's moral and spiritual apostasy, particularly bloodshed and idolatry, which he terms harlotry (e.g. 22:3–4, 11; 23:7; 33:25–6; 36:17–18).

CLEAN/UNCLEAN IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Jewish beliefs

Among first-century Jews purity laws were both important and controversial: different groups had quite different interpretations and applications of the biblical laws. The concern to be ritually clean is shown both by archaeology and the texts relating to this period. More than a sixth of the Mishnah (completed c. AD 200) is concerned with purity regulations, and the New Testament often refers to Jewish beliefs about uncleanness as well as using the terminology of purity and uncleanness in its own way.

Archaeologically the importance of purity is attested by the discovery of numerous Jewish ritual baths or *miqvehs* in Palestine and in the diaspora. The biblical law prescribes that after some kinds of pollution the sufferer must wash himself as part of the cleansing process. This was necessary before he or she could participate in temple worship. By the first century strict Jews were taking daily ritual baths to ensure that they were always ritually clean. To this end many *miqvehs* were constructed. Often these were cut in the rock under buildings or alongside synagogues. They were large tanks (typically 2 m deep and up to 3 m square) with one or two sets of steps for entering and leaving the water. The person to be cleansed walked into the water down one side of the steps, immersed, and then up the other side. The water for a *miqveh* had to flow directly into it, either from a stream or from collected rainwater: a *miqveh* could not be filled from waterpots.

As far as ordinary Jews were concerned, it is assumed that they simply accepted the rules about purity in the Bible. In certain respects first-century practice seems to have become stricter than earlier times. For example, women were expected to bathe after menstruation and childbirth, which is not explicit in Leviticus. Farmers and others involved in the production of priestly food had to be clean when they handled it. Jews outside Palestine often had qualms about eating meat from pagan sources, for it might not have been slaughtered properly to drain all the blood out, or it might have come from a temple where it had been offered to an idol.

But two groups within Judaism, the Qumran community and the Pharisees, interpreted the rules on purity even more strictly. The Qumran community was part of the wider Essene movement that developed in the second century BC and established a monastic community at the northern end of the Dead Sea. This whole community viewed itself as priestly and therefore applied the rules governing priestly purity in the temple to their everyday life. According to Josephus this involved bathing twice a day, before each main meal, and wearing different clothes at table from their working ones. The Essenes rarely if ever drank wine, because priests could

not drink before serving in the temple. They also shunned the use of oil on their skin, because it made the skin sticky and therefore more likely to attract dust that could carry pollution. Their desire for permanent cleanness may explain their famed preference for celibacy, for sexual intercourse is seen as defiling in Leviticus 15:18.

If the Essenes were sticklers for ritual purity, they were also very concerned about moral purity. They held like the Old Testament that sin could pollute the sinner. In the Old Testament only idolatry, sexual offences, and bloodshed have this effect, but the Essenes seem to have held that other grave sins defiled people. Thus sinners within the community and outsiders were banned from the community meals lest they defiled the pure members. Then after punishment and repentance the sinner was readmitted, but only after ritual bathing. The Old Testament envisages bathing as part of the process of cleansing but not as part of the atonement for sin but the Essenes seem to have equated the two procedures.

The Pharisees unlike the Essenes were not concerned with the impurity caused by sin, they focused almost entirely on ritual pollution and its antidotes. Quite how strict they were in the first century is a matter of debate, for the most important sources for their beliefs reflect a later era. The general view is that the Pharisees were a group most concerned with food purity, so that their meals were as pure as those of the Jerusalem priests in the temple. For this reason they insisted on washing their hands before meals, cleansing the inside and outside of cooking vessels, and regulating farming practices so that food would be pure. The evidence that the Pharisees saw themselves as imitating the priests is questionable: their practices could be explained as part of a piety that viewed ingesting impurity by eating as more serious than contracting it by touch. Whatever the explanation, food purity was certainly of great concern to them.

The New Testament

The gospels portray Jesus disputing with the Pharisees on various issues, including purity. Matthew 15:1–20 and Mark 7:1–23 recount a heated debate. It is introduced by ‘Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.’ Jesus concludes that sin which comes from inside a person defiles, not the food that comes from outside. ‘For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.’ On another occasion he criticizes the Pharisees for worrying about the cleanliness of the outside of a pot while not caring about their own purity of heart (Matthew 23:25–6; Luke 11:37–47). He was challenged by Pharisees about his habit of eating with sinners, something they would have avoided to prevent themselves being made unclean, and he replied by telling three parables (Luke 15). In his healing ministry he touched lepers, a woman with a long-term discharge, and even corpses (the acme of uncleanness). Though it is not said that he was criticized by the Pharisees for these actions, they fit in with his general attitude to ritual uncleanness.

At one level his teaching and actions may be viewed as a rejection of Pharisaic custom and a reassertion of the seriousness of the uncleanness caused by sin over against the lesser impurity resulting from food, disease and death. More positively

if these acts are set within the holiness spectrum of the Old Testament (see [Figure 46.4](#) above), where life, holiness and cleanness are associated with God but uncleanness and sin are associated with death, they suggest a new dimension to Jesus' ministry. In the Old Testament the unclean had to wait for their uncleanness to clear up before they could draw near to God in fullness of life. In Jesus, the life-giving God draws near to the unclean, restoring them to life and fellowship with himself. Whereas the Old Testament portrays God as perfect life to which only those with life could have access, Jesus declares God's forgiveness of sin and cleansing of impurity and demonstrates it by associating with sinners and healing the unclean.

In the Old Testament the food laws reminded Israel of her election, of her status as the chosen people distinct from all the other nations. Commenting on Jesus' remarks that food does not pollute, only sin does, Mark says, 'Thus he declared all foods clean.' If all foods were clean, that could imply all nations were potentially clean, that is, open to God's grace. It is therefore striking that the next episode in Mark (7:24–30) tells of Jesus leaving Jewish Galilee and visiting Tyre, where he heals the son of a Greek woman.

However the implications of these comments and actions were not grasped immediately by the early church. Acts 10 tells of the first Gentile convert to enter the church. Cornelius is a Roman centurion posted to Palestine who sends messengers to Peter to enquire about the new faith. While they are on their way to him, Peter has a dream in which he sees a sheet full of unclean animals and reptiles that no Jew would consider eating. But a voice tells him to kill and eat them. He protests that he has never eaten anything common or unclean. But the voice says again, 'What God has cleansed, you must not call common.' Puzzled by this dream, Peter understands what it means only when Cornelius' men arrives and ask him to go and preach to their master. Next day when he reaches Cornelius, Peter justifies his visit as follows: 'You know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with any one of another nation, but God has told me that I should not call any man common or unclean.' His dream suggests that the food laws distinguishing clean and unclean beasts is no longer applicable, and he connects this with the divine permission to evangelize Gentiles as well as Jews. This shows that the symbolic significance of these laws rediscovered in recent times by Mary Douglas was still known in the first century. Jews like Peter realized that they marked Israel's unique status, and that their abrogation signalled a new era in which the kingdom of God was open to believers of all nations.

Such a move was highly contentious among Jewish Christians of a more traditionalist frame of mind and led to a fierce debate at the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), which is reflected in Paul's epistles. However Peter's inclusivist approach to the Gentiles was endorsed with the proviso that Gentile converts should be advised to abstain from idolatry, unchastity, what is strangled, and blood. In other words they were specially warned about those sins that caused prohibited uncleanness as opposed to the tolerated ritual uncleanness. This is akin to the prophets who tended to emphasize the impurity caused by these sins rather than ritual uncleanness.

The same concerns are apparent in the epistles. Paul's basic position about food is that 'nothing is unclean in itself' (Romans 14:14). However if anyone has qualms about eating something, he should avoid it. This is especially the case if eating meat

upsets the faith of others or appears to endorse idolatry. So he tells the Corinthians to avoid meals in pagan temples. (1 Corinthians 8). But they should be prepared to go further: if anyone points out that meat sold in the markets has come from heathen temples, they should avoid eating it (1 Corinthians 10).

Like the prophets and the gospels, the epistles are more concerned with those sins that cause grave uncleanness, namely idolatry, sexual immorality and murder. According to Jesus, 'What comes out of a man . . . makes him unclean . . . evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed', etc. (Mark 7:15, 21–2 NIV). In the epistles uncleanness is sometimes sandwiched between sexual immorality and greed, which is idolatry (e.g. Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5), again reflecting Old Testament thought patterns. However, as in the prophets and Mark 7:21, uncleanness is most often associated with sexual sin (e.g. Romans 1:24; Galatians 5:19), so that impurity is virtually identified with misuse of sex.

In the book of Revelation the oldest meaning of uncleanness is reasserted: it is unfitness to worship in God's temple. So into the new Jerusalem, where God dwells, 'nothing unclean shall enter'. Only those whose clothes have been washed may enter the city. 'Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practises falsehood' (Revelation 21:27; 22:14–15). Thus in the last book of the Bible the notions of purity and uncleanness first mooted in Genesis continue to resonate powerfully.

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PART VIII

THE BIBLE TODAY





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CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

JEWISH BIBLE TRANSLATION



Leonard J. Greenspoon

For at least 2,200 and perhaps as many as 2,500 years, Bible translating has been taking place within the Jewish community. During this long period Jews pioneered, experimented with, and some would say perfected certain types of translation. Although this experience is rich and varied, it is not as well known or well studied among Jews as is the analogous process within the Christian community.

The earliest documentable Bible translation dates from the first half of the third century BCE and is located in the Egyptian capital city and metropolis of Alexandria. As recorded in the *Letter of Aristeas*, which was composed at least a century after the events it purports to narrate from an eyewitness perspective, the second Macedonian/Greek ruler of Egypt, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, was persuaded by his librarian that a Greek translation of the Jewish laws, equivalent in extent to the Pentateuch or Torah, should be carried out under royal auspices, with the resulting text to occupy a place of honor at the great Library (see Shutt 1985 for the most recent translation of, and introduction to, the *Letter of Aristeas*; Greenspoon 1989 provides a more popular account). Seventy-two elders (equivalent to six from each of the traditional twelve tribes of Israel), renowned as scholars and of unblemished morality, were brought in from Jerusalem to insure that the translation would accord with the highest standards of both Hellenistic and Jewish scholarship. After the elders arrived and experienced a prolonged and undoubtedly welcomed reception from Ptolemy, they set about their work. In seventy-two days they completed their task, working in subcommittees and consulting with each other much in the same way that modern translators work (though without the palatial surroundings of their ancient counterparts).

Three aspects of Aristeas's narrative are worthy of further consideration, since they point in many ways to issues that recur in the long history of Jewish Bible translating. At the end of his document Aristeas describes the formal ceremony that, according to him, constituted the acceptance by Alexandrian Jewry of the LXX (Septuagint, or Old Greek) text of the Torah as Sacred Writ. In its details this ceremony is consciously modeled on the account of Moses' giving of the Law in the biblical book of Exodus (see especially Orlinsky 1975). So serious is this matter, according to Aristeas, that a curse is uttered against anyone who would alter the wording of this Greek translation.

That a translation could have sanctity and authority equal to the original is evident in the elaborations and embellishments to which the *Letter of Aristeas* was subject in subsequent Jewish and later Christian retellings of this tale of Septuagint origins. There is nothing of the 'miraculous' in Aristeas's narrative, except for the coincidence (noted somewhat apologetically in the letter itself) that seventy-two scholars took exactly seventy-two days to produce their work. As the story evolved, the seventy-two were placed in individual cells (rather than working in a consultative process, as in Aristeas), each producing a text identical in every respect to all the others. Surely, this pointed to the divine inspiration that guided this project, so much so that the first-century CE Jewish philosopher Philo (himself an Alexandrian) spoke of those responsible for the Septuagint as prophets rather than translators (for details, see Shutt 1985).

As noted above, the *Letter of Aristeas* ascribes to the Ptolemaic government the impetus for this translation. This assertion has been challenged as unlikely, with Septuagint origins more often sought within the Jewish community itself, where (it is reasonably argued) the Hebrew language was increasingly displaced in writing and in speech by Greek, thus necessitating a translation of the former into the latter (for accessible bibliography, see Greenspoon 1989).

In assessing these three issues, we look first at the last and then at the first two, which are closely interrelated. In terms of the impetus for this first Bible translation, the matter is typically phrased as either/or; that is, either the call emanated from outside the Jewish community or from within. In fact, these two views are not mutually exclusive, and we can well imagine a convergence of interests and needs that resulted in the Old Greek version of the Pentateuch. That is likely also to be the case with subsequent translations, since the process is typically bound up with a complex of cultural, social, political, and religious factors.

Moreover, it cannot be demonstrated, even if common sense and opinion make it likely (certain?), that Bible translation results directly from the perception that the original language is no longer comprehensible and must be replaced by a vernacular version. The insight to be considered here is that a translation and the original it reflects may coexist for a period of time, with the former functioning initially as an (official) interpretation of the latter. Subsequently, when the language of the original has indeed fallen out of usage, the translation-as-accompaniment becomes the independent-version-as-replacement. This process would also involve, to a greater or lesser extent, changes of nuance and meaning as words originally tied to one language (in this case Hebrew) now circulate freely in another (here, Greek).

When, at the conclusion of his letter, Aristeas portrays the warm, one might say worshipful, reception proffered by the Jewish community to the Greek translation, it is difficult not to discern a note of stridency and urgency in the narrator's voice. It thus becomes clear that questions of textual authority and authenticity reflect practical and not simply theoretical concerns. Already (that is, by the mid-second century BCE), voices were raised in opposition to the high status apparently accorded to the Septuagint. The source of this opposition can probably be located in Jerusalem, but it could have developed elsewhere or in fact anywhere careful readers noted differences between the Greek and Hebrew texts. Today we understand that such differences are as likely (or more likely) to arise from the fact that the Old Greek

translators had before them Semitic texts that differed from those gaining ascendancy elsewhere (especially, we can well imagine, in Jerusalem) as they are from conscious interpretive changes on the part of the translators themselves. Ancient observers were undoubtedly less concerned about the reasons for such differences (which they would probably have viewed as discrepancies) than with their existence (for further details, consult Peters 1992).

Accepting the unique authority of the Hebrew text carried with it the necessity of revising the Greek where it differed. Such an attitude was a major motivating factor in the work of Theodotion, Aquila, and Symmachus, to whom Greek texts of the first centuries BCE and CE are attributed. In my opinion, all three were Jewish and motivated, among other factors, by a concern to reconcile the current Greek editions with the then-regnant Hebrew texts. If they and other unnamed individuals carrying out the same sort of revision and retranslation were aware of Aristes's view, they implicitly rejected or ignored it through their efforts. More explicit in terms of his evaluation of the Septuagint's authority as secondary is the author of Ben Sirach, as he makes clear in his prologue. Aristes was not without his later supporters within the Jewish community (so Philo, see above), and the attitude he promoted dominated early Christian thought and practice (with the marked exception of Jerome) (Greenspoon 1992, 1993).

Among these Greek speakers we detect no suggestion that Bible translation *per se* was to be avoided as unnecessary (since all educated Jews ought to know Hebrew) or dangerous (since potentially misleading interpretations and new meanings could be introduced into what should be a uniquely immutable and sacred text). Out-and-out opposition to Bible translation does appear in some rabbinic texts, whose dates and provenance are difficult to determine (as is often the case with such material). But there are other rabbinic pronouncements far more favorable to translations of the Bible, some of which hold the Greek version in highest repute. It is likely that the totality of such material accurately reflects deep divisions among rabbinic authorities (and their communities), tied to chronological (e.g., before or after the fall of the Jerusalem Temple in 73 CE), geographical (in the Land or the Diaspora), ideological, and other factors (see several articles in Orlinsky 1974; also Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991: 6–7).

In sum, the *Letter of Aristes* accurately and rather forcefully presents a case for Septuagintal origins that was being made, I would guess, in at least one mid-second century Jewish community – quite possibly in Alexandria itself. As evidence for what *really* happened a hundred or so years earlier, this document is not unexpectedly far from completely reliable, but (I maintain) equally far from useless in reconstructing the circumstances in which the very first biblical translation arose. We can, I feel, be especially grateful that the author of Aristes raised almost all of the questions that would continue to both plague and enrich Jewish Bible translating from that point until the present.

There is, however, one matter that received essentially no comment in the letter and was little commented upon explicitly elsewhere in ancient Jewish (and most Christian) sources; namely, what sort of translation was this oldest Greek version of the Torah. Today we can speak of literal and free (with interlinear and paraphrase defining the respective ends of what may be termed the translation continuum).

Or we can use more precise terms such as formal equivalence and dynamic or functional equivalence. Ancient translators certainly knew of these (and other) options even if they differed with respect to terminology.

From almost all perspectives ancient and modern, the Old Greek of the Pentateuch belongs squarely in the literal or functional equivalence realms of translating. We are not able in all cases to (re)construct the Hebrew text or *Vorlage* that lay before these translators, but where we can (and even when we are not sure) it is clear that they generally translated to the best of their abilities what was in front of them. This is not to say that there were no modifications for ideological reasons or for purposes of updating a text that was by then antiquarian and antiquated. However, most changes simply sought to convey to the reader what the translators understood the Hebrew to be saying. In this process the translators could count on a considerable amount of shared linguistic and theological knowledge with their intended audience.

Careful study of the Old Greek of the Pentateuch does allow for generalizations of the type presented in the previous paragraph. And it is accurate to speak of this Greek text as serving as something of a model for many of the later translators responsible for the Old Greek version of the remainder of the Old Testament. But such research also reveals the fact that the five books of the Torah are not the product of one individual or group of individuals. Rather, we can detect at least one translator for each of the five books (with the possibility of more than one for the book of Exodus).

When we move beyond the Pentateuch, the diversity of translation style or technique increases. In the opinion of some, this reflects the lesser or looser degree of sanctity in which books outside of the Torah were regarded by Jews in the Hellenistic period. But this explanation cannot be maintained. First, the approach taken by the Pentateuchal translators, while not unrelated to the sanctity in which they held Holy Writ, is probably more the result of their being pioneers than anything else. For they had no antecedents, no tradition from which they could directly draw. In such circumstances, it made more sense, from a technical as much as a theological perspective, simply to render as clearly and cleanly as possible what appeared in the Hebrew before them.

Moreover, there are a number of other books of the Septuagint that partake of a fairly literal approach as well as those far down on the free or functional scale. This is partly a result of how individual translators or groups of translators approached their task, about which we have no secure evidence outside of the texts themselves, since the translators left no introductions, committee minutes, or notes of any kind. But the varied nature of the Septuagint translations is also the result of the fact that our Septuagint is an artificial construct, containing not only the Old Greek of many books (such as the Pentateuch) but later versions or revisions, as in the case of Daniel and Ecclesiastes. This circumstance arises from the fact that the great Greek uncials, such as Alexandrinus and Vaticanus, contain a mixture of oldest, older, and newer materials, presumably reflecting the practice of the churches in the areas where these codices were produced in the early Christian centuries (for further discussion of these issues and extensive bibliography, see Peters 1992; Tov 1997).

These observations hold true for other Bible translations within Jewish (and other) contexts, in the sense that what we have is not always the oldest, not always the

best, not always the most authentic produced. In the happenstance of preservation, transmission, and collation, we have surely lost a lot. But perhaps the greater source of surprise and certainly of satisfaction is that so much has been preserved.

Research into what has been preserved of ancient Jewish Bible translations into Greek yields one further important insight: the tendency among later translators and revisers was toward a more literal representation of the Hebrew. This is true not only in the quantitative changes necessary to bring older Greek texts into conformity with the Hebrew (understood as the original), but also in the numerous qualitative changes, where even the limited lexical and stylistic freedoms indulged in by, say, the Pentateuchal translators were eradicated or leveled through deference to the Hebrew. This led not only to the very readable and generally accurate version identified with Theodotion, but the heavily Hebraized rendering associated with Aquila that would have been difficult if not impossible for most Greek speakers to comprehend without recourse to the Hebrew (see Greenspoon 1992). But Aquila's approach did indeed remain popular among Greek-speaking Jews in spite of our perception of its shortcomings, as is witnessed by the fact that these Jews continued to use and further develop an Aquila-like Greek Bible through the Byzantine Period (so de Lange 1995).

Although it is commonplace (and, I believe, largely correct) to speak of the Septuagint or Old Greek as the earliest Bible translation, it is likely that the process of rendering the Bible into a foreign language has an even earlier origin within the Jewish community. [Chapter 9](#) of the biblical book of Nehemiah describes what is clearly a momentous event in mid-fifth century BCE Jerusalem. The scribe Ezra, having recently arrived from Babylon, was reading to the assembled populace from the Book of the Law (roughly equivalent, I suggest, to our Torah) in Hebrew. As Ezra spoke, so the book of Nehemiah narrates, others provided an explanation of Ezra's words for the benefit of the huge crowd gathered to hear them.

As understood by many scholars (and I tend to agree), the explanation was in the form of translation/interpretation into the Aramaic language, which by then was the lingua franca of the Near East. (Although Hebrew and Aramaic are closely related Semitic languages, knowledge of one did not necessarily lead to competency in the other.) If this understanding of the event pictured in Nehemiah 8 is correct, we can look to this as the initial context for Bible translating. Two factors bear further notice. First, the procedure envisioned at this point is oral, with no indication of scribal activity in Aramaic. Second, the Aramaic translation/interpretation is portrayed as supplementing, rather than supplanting, the Hebrew.

The term 'Targum' (plural 'Targumim' or 'Targums'), from the Aramaic word for translation, is generally used to denote Aramaic texts of the Bible (for extended discussions, with full bibliography, see Alexander 1992; Beattie and McNamara 1994). There are few written Targums from pre-Christian times. As recorded in Jewish tradition, the Torah was the first portion of the Hebrew Bible rendered into Aramaic. This accords well with the procedure followed by those responsible for the Septuagint and also with Jewish beliefs and practices from almost all periods, whereby the Torah is given greatest prominence. Fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran do provide some confirmation for tradition, in that two small fragments from Cave 4 preserve a Targum to the book of Leviticus. It may be only

by chance, although perhaps not, that the most extensive remains of a Targum at Qumran are from the book of Job (VanderKam 1994: 32–3).

Far more extensive and very well studied are the Targums from the Christian or common era. There are several important Aramaic texts of the Torah; Targums also exist for the Former Prophets (roughly equivalent to the Historical Books in the Christian tradition), the Latter Prophets, and the Writings (Ketubim, the third section into which Jews divide the Hebrew Bible). They stem from both Palestine and Babylonia, with the latter becoming dominant in subsequent times.

Looked at as a whole and with due allowance for differences in time and locale, the Targums do not support the oft-articulated assertion that they are uniformly periphrastic. Upon closer examination, those responsible for the Targums are seen as carefully representing the thoughts, if not the exact words, that appeared in their *Vorlage*. At the same time, many (although surely not all) Targumists felt free to add extensive and extended narrative and legal material into the text they were translating. Much of this material was in the form of updating, to conform to beliefs and practices of the communities in which the Targums were produced. Among the techniques thus adopted by the Targumists were circumlocutions for references to the Divine. In a practice parallel to successive revisions of the Greek text, later Aramaic versions tended to admit fewer and fewer periphrastic passages.

It is likely that, if queried, those who prepared the Aramaic version would have responded that their additions and other modifications were in complete accord with Oral Tradition, which was held to be of equal antiquity and authority with the Written Law from Mount Sinai. The Aramaic text that resulted was as a whole quite different in its texture from much of the Greek version we call the Septuagint, in that the latter tended to be more sparing in its acceptance of exegetical interventions on the part of translators (Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991: 4–6). I hasten to add a caveat pertaining to all vast enterprises (the LXX and the Targums emphatically included) that are the results of many people working over an extended period of time: namely, that each book or body of material must be looked at separately; generalizations are to be avoided.

It has long been noted – and more recently discussed with greater linguistic and methodological sophistication – that the writers of the New Testament often cited Scripture in a form identical to the LXX or at least closer to the LXX than to the Masoretic Text (see Archer and Chirichigno 1983; Barr 1994; Lim 1997). This is not at all surprising, given that most of the writers of the New Testament were Greek-speaking Jews, who would have been familiar with their sacred writings in that language as the appropriate means of conveying their beliefs to the world at large. Less frequent, but also demonstrable, is the dependence of some New Testament writers on an Aramaic version of Scripture. These examples combine with the Qumran fragments and with isolated historical allusions in existing Palestinian and Babylonian Targumim to document the reality, if not the scope, of Aramaic translations in pre-Christian times.

The Hebrew Bible (along with what later came to be known as the New Testament) circulated widely in a number of other ancient languages. Among the most prominent were texts in Syriac (Eastern Aramaic) and Latin. By at least the third century CE, most, if not all, of the Old Testament had been rendered into

Syriac, and it is possible that Jews were responsible for some of this translating. But little is known of the process that ultimately led to the Peshitta, as the standard version of the Syriac Bible became known within Eastern churches.

The efforts of Jerome, in the late fourth century, that culminated in the Latin version eventually known as the Vulgate, were not – as is commonly thought – the first to produce a Bible in the reigning language of the Western Roman Empire. Rather, Jerome's mandate, which he fulfilled with extraordinary industry, was to prepare a text that would supplant the many older Latin renderings already in existence. Although it is well known that Jerome learned the Hebrew language and something of Jewish exegetical traditions from contemporary rabbis, there is no sure evidence that any Jews produced a Latin text of the Bible for their own use. We should, however, leave open at least the possibility that in some community or other, perhaps in North Africa (where Christians first translated biblical texts into Latin), Jews followed the lead of their Alexandrian ancestors.

Beginning in the mid-seventh century, Jews resident in the East and in North Africa came under the sway of Muslim rule and the Islamic religion. With these political and religious changes, the Arabic language came to the fore. As was the case with Greek- and Aramaic-speaking Jews in earlier times, the need arose for a Jewish Bible translation into Arabic. Unlike the Septuagint or Targums, however, the version that filled this need was not the product of one or more groups, but rather of a single individual, an extraordinary individual at that, Saadia ben Joseph, who was the Gaon (or head of a rabbinic academy) in early tenth-century Babylonia (for his life, see Malter 1921).

Saadia Gaon, as he is commonly known, was actively involved in the communal affairs of his people and did not shy away from controversy. He, nonetheless, found the time to prepare an Arabic translation of the Hebrew Bible. This text, although in the Arabic language, was probably written with Hebrew characters, making it likely that Saadia's primary audience was his fellow Jews. Saadia sought to present to his contemporaries the unadorned meaning of the Hebrew, as he understood it. In order to accomplish his goal, he was willing to jettison distinctive features of Hebrew grammar and syntax in favor of clear exposition in Arabic. The resultant text achieved a rare balance between elegance and intelligibility (so Margolis 1917: 53–5; Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991: 21–3; Orlinsky 1992: 839). So successful was Saadia that his version, albeit revised several times over the centuries, continues in use among Yemenite Jews to this very day.

For the early modern and modern periods, as for antiquity and the early Middle Ages, my discussion is necessarily selective – reflecting the available evidence, but also my interests and research strengths. This comment arises not so much as an apology, but as an invitation for readers to go beyond the specific examples I provide so as to appreciate more fully the richness of the process I am describing.

Among the European languages we look first at Spanish. Jews, who had fared well on the Iberian Peninsula under Muslim rule, were forced by Christians to leave, culminating in the (in)famous expulsion of 1492. So it was that the most famous and influential Jewish Bible translation into Spanish came not from Spain, but from Italy, specifically the northern city of Ferrara, to which Jews had fled in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This Ferrara Bible was first printed in 1553,

making use of Hebrew characters (as, e.g., Saadia had done earlier). Its essentially Jewish character is also evident in its close adherence to Hebrew syntax, its transcription of many Hebrew proper names, and its division of the text in accordance with traditional Jewish practice.

But there is more. The Ferrara Bible, which later appeared in Roman script, formed the basis for other Spanish-language Bibles designed for use among the general, that is, non-Jewish populace. It may be thought that certain theologically sensitive passages would require distinctive handling when a Bible originally aimed at a Jewish audience was made widely available to Christians, and vice versa. Indeed, that is frequently the case, as we shall see below. Interestingly enough, such sensitivity does *not* seem to be the reason for there being three different renderings of the Hebrew word *alma* (young woman) at Isaiah 7:14 in various editions of the Ferrara Bible. Although it is tempting to ascribe the rendering 'virgin' to Christian interests and to allocate the translation 'maiden' and the transcription *alma* to Jewish circles, the available evidence simply does not allow for such a neat division (on this and related issues, see Margolis 1917: 62–3; Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991: 122–3; Orlinsky 1992: 839–40).

Jews resided in German-speaking lands from earliest times. Their translation efforts with respect to the Bible can be traced back to the 1200s, when very – one might even say painfully – literal versions appeared, each covering a book or block of the Hebrew Bible. Serviceable at best within the contexts of homes and schools, these texts were devoid of literary merit or charm (for an overview of Jewish translations into German, see Billigheimer 1968).

The efforts of Jacob ben Isaac of Yarnow (in eastern Poland), as published in the mid-1600s, had a far greater impact on subsequent renderings of the biblical text. His work, first known as the *Teutsch Humash*, incorporated an extraordinary amount of extraneous, largely haggadic, material. A single biblical verse of a dozen or so words could be expanded into a creative narrative encompassing dozens of phrases, hundreds of words. The reader of this would naturally come to understand his or her 'Bible' in terms of the augmented picture thus presented. Although we might be reluctant to bestow the title 'translation' on such a paraphrase, this Judeo-German version was not so very different from certain of the freer Aramaic Targums.

Moreover, such embellishments were thought to be especially appropriate for the intended audience of such a work, which is more widely known as the *Tsena Ureena* (a Hebrew phrase from Song of Songs 3:11). This was a 'Women's Bible' (Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991: 125). While this designation may today carry with it feminist overtones, nothing was farther from the minds of those who understood this version, and others, in this manner: men should know the Hebrew Bible in its original language; translations are for women and children, for the home and schools. This understanding of the preferred, if not always actual, audience for Jewish Bible translations persisted well into the twentieth century in some places. By their adopting (and adapting) the practice of Bible translating, virtually all Jewish groups today are united in their recognition of the necessity of this practice – for all segments of their constituencies.

A steady stream of Jewish translations, typically by individual rabbis or printers, continued throughout this period. The foremost accomplishment in German Bible

translating, however, came not from Jews, but from the Protestant reformer Martin Luther. His German version of the Old Testament, on which he labored from 1522 to 1534, was a monumental literary, linguistic, and theological achievement, against which all subsequent undertakings would be measured, whether or not they sought such comparisons. Luther's language was forceful; his diction direct. Imbued with a strong sense of the justness of his own (he would have said, the Lord's) cause, he brought the Old, and then the New, Testament to life as a vitalizing force in his efforts to reform Christianity.

When, some two and a half centuries later, the Jewish intellectual Moses Mendelssohn sought to create a new version for his family and for his community, he did not turn his back on all that Luther had accomplished. At the same time, he strongly felt that Jews should not be dependent on Christians and Christological presuppositions. A translation for Jews must be a product of Jews. Something of the same argumentation is evident in the development of English translations, as we shall note shortly.

Mendelssohn had another motive in mind as he crafted his version; namely, that the language and style of his German should conform to the best in general (that is, non-Jewish) German literature of his day. Although others might argue that a simpler form of German was in keeping both with the Semitic original of the Hebrew Bible and with the women and children who required translation in the first place, Mendelssohn viewed such tortured jargon as an impediment to the acceptance of Jews into German society (and to the acceptance of the ideas and ideals of German society by Jews). Among the elites, both Jewish and Christian, to whom Mendelssohn had his greatest appeal, his translation and accompanying commentaries were quite successful. One way to measure this success is by observing that his translation, although for the most part printed in Hebrew characters when first published, soon circulated in German script, with two desirable (from Mendelssohn's perspective) results – German Jews would become more deeply acquainted with the German language, German non-Jews with an 'elevated' version of Judaism (for further details see Margolis 1917: 86–7; Billigheimer 1968).

Throughout the nineteenth century, as successive editions of Mendelssohn appeared, a number of other versions, in German or in Judeo-German, reached what was clearly a growing market. Some of these efforts made extensive use of insights coming out of the new critical schools of biblical interpretation, while at the same time maintaining a distinctively Jewish flavor. Orthodox communities supported versions that adhered to more traditional Jewish sources. As Reform and Orthodox adherents developed rival synagogues and institutions of learning, it seemed natural that the battle would spill over to the Bible, in translated form. Recognizing perhaps in a more positive light than earlier the value of Bible reading and study in the home, several versions were specifically packaged as Family Bibles.

Bible translating by Jews continued up to, and in some cases beyond, the Holocaust. One of the most extraordinary German-language translation projects had its inception in the pre-World War I period and reached completion only in the early 1960s. This version grew out of the very fruitful and original collaboration between two Jewish philosophers, Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. Their philosophy of translation could not be more different from Mendelssohn's. As they worked

through the Hebrew Bible, they sought to reflect, to the greatest extent possible for German speakers, its distinctive features in terms of sound, sentence structure, and sensitivity to every nuance of the Original. The result was nothing like nineteenth- or twentieth-century German. It was difficult to read, but worthy of the effort if readers were willing to allow themselves to be transported to another time, to another place, to another culture. If Buber–Rosenzweig sounded foreign, and it did, so much the better, for the (con)text of the Bible was from another, far distant, culture. (The materials collected and translated in Buber–Rosenzweig 1994 provide fascinating insight into the theoretical nature and practical consequences of their approach.)

In this way, readers would be brought to the text (rather than the text to the reader). Buber and Rosenzweig understood this as a singularly Jewish accomplishment, a task to which they wholeheartedly devoted themselves. The society in which Buber and Rosenzweig had begun their work was destroyed, but their legacy remains – not only in reprints of their German version, but in the highly praised English-language Torah recently published by Everett Fox (in the introduction to Fox 1995, Everett Fox explicates his dependence on and independence from his distinguished predecessors; see also Greenstein 1989).

Efforts to interact with mainstream German language, literature, and society were paralleled, if not matched, by the recurrence of versions in Yiddish, intended for those millions of Jews in Europe and North America whose first (or second) language it was. As with Buber–Rosenzweig, perhaps the most notable achievement in this regard came late in the game, as it were. As early as 1910 Solomon Bloomgarden (1870–1927), using the pen name Yehoash, began publishing his version of the Hebrew Bible in Yiddish. Working for the most part in the United States, he continued to perfect his craft and revise his text almost up to the day of his death. Much of his translation was published in serialized form in a Yiddish daily, and it was a decade after his death before his work appeared in its entirety (for Yehoash, see especially Orlinsky 1974: 310–12 and 418–22; also Malachi 1963–4; Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991: 126–7). By that time, of course, what was left of Yiddish-speaking communities in Europe was already destined for destruction. Yehoash's work, thankfully, survives.

Jewish translations of the Bible, as this phrase is commonly and correctly understood, are versions prepared by Jews primarily for the benefit and education of other Jews. We should acknowledge, if only in passing, that some individuals who were born Jews but converted to Christianity prepared translations of the Old Testament to aid in Christian proselytizing of Jews. Thus, there were several Yiddish translations of the Bible – Old and New Testaments – aimed specifically at the Jews of Central and East Europe, as well as those immigrating to the United States (Greenspoon 1998a). In this connection we can also mention Hebrew translations of the New Testament. Those former Jews who took part in such projects, and the Christians who supported them, were undoubtedly motivated by the belief that they were benefiting Jews by making the Good News accessible to them. This view was not, of course, shared by other Jews or by all Christians.

There are many parallels – some deliberate, some by chance – between the history of English- and German-language translations of the Bible by Jews. Jews have lived for a shorter period in the United Kingdom and certainly in North America than

in German lands, and their experience in Great Britain has been marked by periods of expulsion and prejudice in addition to eras of acceptance and cooperation. It was during one of the former that the King James or Authorized Version (KJV) of the Bible appeared, in 1611. In many ways, the KJV functions for English speakers as Luther's version does for Germans. It stands not as the first Bible translation into English (as so many people even to this day mistakenly believe), but as the culmination of several centuries of dedicated efforts both in the British Isles and in Europe. Its vocabulary, its turn of phrase, its very format still define for many what the English Bible should look and sound like. Love it or hate it (and indeed emotions about the KJV often run high), no later translator could ignore it.

The influence wielded by the KJV was so great that it influenced Jews as well as Christians. For a century after the mid-1660s, when Jews were again allowed in England, the KJV apparently served their needs on those occasions when they required an English text of the Hebrew Bible. It was not until the late 1770s that the Jews of England had an English Bible of their own – and even here that term may be a bit misleading, since the earliest efforts among Jews consisted of a Hebrew text, facing the KJV, with a sprinkling of notes (in English or in Hebrew) from classical Jewish commentators like Rashi. Soon the Jewish community had access to collections of passages, where the KJV rendering was considered either erroneous or not in keeping with Jewish exegesis. It was not until the 1840s that a complete version of an English Bible by/for Jews appeared (for details on these and later developments, see Hertz 1938 [unfortunately, this article is not widely available]; see also Margolis 1917: 93–105; Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991: 127–44; Orlinsky 1992: 840–2; Greenspoon 1993: 31–8).

The motives leading to these and later developments are complex, and involve factors both internal and external to the Jewish community itself. In this respect, I suggest, activities in England recall (without being identical to) those early efforts in Alexandria with which I began this account of Jewish translations. The Jews of England, with their center in London, were clearly becoming more and more comfortable with the English language in their personal as well as professional lives. There were considerable numbers of Jews from both German (Yiddish)- and Spanish-speaking lands; both groups established extensive synagogue and social structures to serve the needs of their constituents. By the early 1800s prayer books that included at least some English and some sermons in English were regular features of many synagogues throughout London. In this context, editions of the Bible that incorporated both Hebrew and English (even if the English text was virtually identical to the KJV) made sense (Greenspoon forthcoming).

At the same time (i.e., the early 1800s), missionary groups aimed specifically at converting Jews to Christianity (primarily, Protestant Christianity) were founded and quickly gained the financial support and social status associated with 'causes' favored by many of the elite. The London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews, often referred to simply as the London Jews Society, was the most prominent, but certainly not the only example, of such groups. The British and Foreign Bible Society, founded in 1804, was not a missionary enterprise, but did serve the cause of missionaries by making huge numbers of Bibles, including translations into Yiddish and other languages aimed at Jews (see also above), available at low cost

(Greenspoon 1998a). Jewish efforts to produce Bible translations *of their own* were undoubtedly in part a reaction to the often fever-pitched proselytizing they experienced (for some details, see Greenspoon 1998b).

Nonetheless, it took a while, in fact about a half century, before the leadership of English Jewry grasped the potential value of English-language versions of the Bible. By and large, the earlier texts had been produced by those on the periphery of organized Judaism or even in opposition to its leadership. But, by the mid-1800s, this had all changed. Several Jewish versions trumpeted the sanction/approval of the Chief Rabbi himself on their title pages. Interestingly enough, this phenomenon demonstrates that there is something equivalent to 'authorized' versions among at least some Jews — but with a most significant difference *vis-à-vis* Protestant Christianity. Christian Bibles, most prominently the KJV and certain of its successors, were authorized for use in church. The 'authority' bestowed on Jewish translations was specifically located in the home and the classroom. This accords with the phenomenon we observed in connection with German Bibles that emphasized the role of Jewish women and children as primary users of translated Bibles. But, as was also the case among German speakers, the make-up of potential audiences for English Bibles was soon expanded through the designation of some as Family Bibles and the sponsorship of others by prominent community-wide organizations like the Jewish Publication Society of America (to which we turn shortly).

A few further observations are in order concerning these English-language versions. Throughout the nineteenth century and especially during the first decades of the twentieth, we can observe growing dissatisfaction with the KJV on the part of some Christians. Fresh translations, some embodying an appeal to more up-to-date vocabulary and grammar, began to appear, alongside increasingly extensive KJV revisions. By and large, the Jewish community stuck with the basic KJV style and format well into the middle of the twentieth century, which was long after its abandonment by many Christians. Some might attribute this conservatism, if you will, to an effort on the part of Jews to be 'more English than the English,' and indeed the established leadership of British Jewry rarely sought to rock the boat. On the other hand, many of the KJV's distinctive features were the result of careful study of the Hebrew text and of classical Jewish sources, especially David Kimchi. A century earlier, as Luther worked on his German Old Testament, he had access to Rashi. In this way, then, both the KJV and Luther, although clearly not Jewish Bibles, do transmit Jewish exegesis (Margolis 1917 *passim*; Orlinsky 1990; Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991 *passim*; Greenspoon 1993: 26–31).

The figure of Luther or of Jerome, each of whom dominated if they did not entirely translate *their* version, recalls the similar identification of most English- and German-language Jewish translations with an individual or a pair of individuals. This does not suggest, at least not uniformly, a lack of communal support, but does contrast with the translation-by-committee that resulted in the KJV and its successors/revisions (the RV, RSV, NRSV, NASB, among others) and, on the Jewish side, the LXX and Targums, so far as we can reconstruct their origins.

The number of English versions produced in the nineteenth century by America's Jews was considerably smaller than those produced in Great Britain, not surprisingly given the relatively lower number of Jews resident there prior to the great

immigrations of the 1880s and following decades. It is perhaps surprising that, despite the smaller numbers (of Jews and of Jewish versions), the most distinctive and distinguished nineteenth-century Jewish translation into English emanates from the United States (for an overview, see Sarna and Sarna 1988; Sarna 1989). This was the work of one individual, Isaac Leeser, who published his Torah in the mid-1840s, followed approximately a decade later by his version of the whole Hebrew Bible, which was frequently republished over the next seven decades and served as *the* English Bible for almost all Jews in North America and many in Europe. Leeser recalls Saadia Gaon, in that he was actively involved in all aspects of contemporary communal affairs. Like Saadia, he was in many ways the leading Jew of his day (in addition to sources cited above, see Sussman 1985). Unlike Saadia, however, whose version garnered almost unanimous praise and is still in use, Leeser's translation, although gaining the support of many, did have its detractors – and a much briefer 'shelf life' than Saadia's.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Jewish community of the United States had grown in organizational sophistication to the point that it could support an important publishing operation, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS). It was under its aegis that a group gathered in the early 1910s, under the leadership of Max L. Margolis, to prepare what amounted to Leeser's successor. In practice, this committee but lightly revised the Revised Version of 1885, which itself constituted the first major revision of the KJV. Christological interpretations were expunged, and Jewish exegesis found its way into the text. But overall this JPS version, which initially appeared in 1917, looked and sounded very much like the KJV. This especially suited Margolis who, himself an immigrant from Eastern Europe, firmly believed that the stately, if decidedly dated, diction and style associated with the KJV offered to his fellow immigrants the very best possible exemplar for 'proper' English usage. Margolis, who was a superb scholar, clearly knew of the earlier efforts of Mendelssohn, and consciously fashioned himself, and his version, in that mold (see further Margolis 1917: 99–105, 115–6; Greenspoon 1987: 55–75; 1988, 1990; Sarna 1989: 104–16). This also served the purposes of the Jewish establishment that financed and in general supported this JPS effort.

Like Leeser, the JPS 1917 served English-speaking Jews for about half a century. Its place, in turn, has been taken by a new JPS Bible translation, under the general editorship of Harry M. Orlinsky. Begun in the 1950s, the full *TANAKH* (as it is titled) first appeared in the mid-1980s. It has been frequently reprinted and repackaged in a variety of formats and editions. This New Jewish Version marks a distinct departure from almost all earlier English-language versions for Jews, in that it consciously abandons the KJV's more literal approach for the dynamic or functional equivalence also favored by such contemporary non-Jewish projects as the Good News Bible and the Contemporary English Version (on this translation, see several chapters in Orlinsky 1974, 1969; Sarna 1989: 233–47; Greenstein 1990; Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991: 179–91).

Among Christians, especially Protestants, the post-World War II period has seen the proliferation, some might say explosion, of new, often competing English-language Bibles. Moreover, many of these, and in particular the New International Version, offer their text in an almost endless variety of packages aimed at increasingly

specific markets (e.g., recent widows, teenaged virgins, recovering alcoholics). The market for Jewish Bible translations is naturally smaller, and parallel developments within it are correspondingly fewer in number and in scope. But it is not clear that, at the end of the twentieth century, there is a dominant Jewish Bible translation in English – as there was at that century's beginning (among recent versions and editions are Kaplan 1981; *TANAKH* 1985; Plaut 1991; Fox 1995; Plaut 1996; *The Tanach* 1996).

There are many factors – theological, literary, social, even fiscal – that promote the production of Bible translations in today's society. The number of factors and of translations and the immediacy and scope of their influence are unprecedented. But the questions they raise and, by and large, the answers that come to mind are at least as old as the oldest Bible translation. What is it that makes a translation Jewish (see Greenstein 1989, 1990)? Can/should a Jewish translation of the Bible ever be conceived as more than a complement to the Hebrew Original? Who in the end, if anyone, can determine which translation is good/better/best for Jews and in what contexts? It is difficult, if not impossible, to predict developments even for the next few decades. The Bible, in its original languages and in translation, has unique potential to unify or to divide. At their best, Jewish Bible translations will – I hope – continue to serve the needs of their communities, whose very nature and make-up they themselves will influence.

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CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

CHRISTIAN BIBLE TRANSLATION



Henry Wansbrough

It would be impossible in the short space of this chapter to consider translations into every language. There are still languages into which the Bible is being translated for the first time. Since this book is being published in English the concentration will be on the formation of the English Bible. But the English Bible cannot be understood without a previous consideration of the Latin translation of the Bible that for over a millennium constituted the Bible of western civilization, and which was the basis of all early translations. Secondly, I shall outline early attempts, up to the Renaissance and Reformation, to render the Bible into the vernacular. Thirdly, I shall consider the genesis in the fifteenth century of the first complete vernacular Bibles, to which so much of our culture since then is indebted. Finally, modern English translations of the Bible and the spread of modern translations of the Bible will be surveyed.

THE LATIN VULGATE

From the time of Constantine's acceptance of Christianity (symbolically dated from the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 313 CE) till the Reformation in the fifteenth century, Christianity, and a Latin Christianity at that, was increasingly the dominant culture of western Europe. Latin was the language of law, science, politics, literature and religion, and in general of all civilized written intercourse. Myriad quotations and allusions throughout this period refer back to the Latin version, which became known as the Vulgate, that is, diffused or common, Bible. The dominant position it had held for many centuries was confirmed by the pronouncement of the Council of Trent in 1546 that it should be considered the authentic version of the Bible. In the Roman Catholic Church it has retained this position. To this day it is still used in the Latin liturgy celebrated on international Church occasions.

This great version of the Bible was essentially the work of one man, Jerome. Jerome had been born in the Roman province of Dalmatia and had been meticulously trained in the classics, to the extent that he once dreamed that he was being divinely rebuked, 'You are not a Christian but a Ciceronian' (*Letter* 22.30). Before his time a scatter of Latin versions had existed. In 382 CE Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome to work on the text of the gospels, and to decide which of the many

versions agreed with the original Greek (*Praef. in Quattuor Evangelia*). The first translations of the Greek Bible into the Latin of the west had been made in Africa and western Europe in the second century. Two centuries later there were 'almost as many forms of the text as there are copies', says Jerome. Jerome now set about revising the gospels. He claims to have revised 'the New Testament', but this revision does not seem to have included the whole of the New Testament. It is doubtful whether the version incorporated in the Vulgate of the Acts, the New Testament letters and the book of Revelation stems from Jerome; he certainly quotes a version of the letter of James that differs widely from the Vulgate version. In his commentaries on several of Paul's letters he criticizes details of the text on which he is commenting, and ascribes it freely to other translators. He rightly predicts that his revision would be greeted with anger by those who preferred the familiar versions, even if they were incorrect. His reply to his critics is characteristically both abusive and exact, pointing out how much superior are the readings he adopts (*Letter 27*).

It was only after the death of his patron Pope Damasus, and Jerome's departure from Rome to take up residence in Bethlehem, that he embarked upon a revision of the Old Testament. At this time the Bible of Christianity was the Greek Septuagint, to the entire neglect of the Hebrew Bible. It did not seem to occur to anyone, even to Jerome himself, that the Hebrew should be consulted. At first Jerome worked on his Greek version of the Bible, following the great Greek biblical scholar Origen. He made a second revision of the Psalter (the first, made at Rome, is entirely lost), basing himself still on the Old Latin version, but also using Origen's text and his own knowledge of Hebrew. This was the version of the Psalms that was to be used throughout the Christian west for over 1,500 years.

Gradually, however, he became more and more aware of the limitations of the Septuagint. The Greek (and Latin versions that depended on it) lacked the literary merit of the original Hebrew. Furthermore, the differences between the various Greek versions made it essential for accuracy to return to what Jerome came to call the 'Hebrew truth'. One very important factor for him seems to have been controversy with the Jews, who scoffed at the inaccuracy of the scriptures used by Christians. He had long ago confronted the task of learning Hebrew ('How often I despaired; how often I gave up and in my eagerness to learn started again', *Letter 125.12*), and also acquired some knowledge of Aramaic and Syriac. Such a return to the Hebrew was nothing short of revolutionary, but Jerome was daunted neither by the unpopularity such a return would inevitably incur in traditionalist circles, nor by the warning of Augustine of Hippo that it would create a split between Latin Christianity and the Greek-speaking east. Augustine warns Jerome that the unfamiliarity of his new translation of Jonah occasioned such a riot at Oea in Tripoli that the bishop felt obliged to appeal to some local Jews for arbitration. And they, 'whether from ignorance or from spite', supported the old translation (Augustine, *Letter 71:3-5*)! Jerome's prefaces to his translations of different books of the Old Testament reflect the controversy and outrage that his return to the Hebrew aroused.

Jerome's methods and the care he devoted to each book differed considerably. He worked on the Old Testament for some 15 years, but he claims to have produced the three books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs in three days (*Praefatio in Libr. Sal.*). The short books of Tobit and Judith he considered to be of less

importance since they were apocryphal. He co-opted the best scholar of Hebrew and Aramaic he could find, and seems to have been content with an oral running translation, for he says he 'gave to the subject one day's hasty labour, my method being to explain in Latin, with the aid of a secretary, whatever an interpreter expressed to me in Hebrew' (*Prefatio*).

Two general characteristics of this great translation should be noted. Firstly, Jerome is well aware of the need for the translator to tread the tightrope between slavish literalism and paraphrase; several of his letters discuss the problem (e.g. *Letters* 57, 99). In one of his letters he avers that there is a 'mystery' even in the order of the words. By this he means that even the order of words has religious significance. Reverence for the actual words of the sacred text is one of the marks of Jerome's work, and in some books (e.g. the Psalter) the flow of the Latin is undoubtedly sacrificed to a doggedly literal reproduction of the Hebrew words and constructions. The first books translated, Samuel and Kings, are considerably more literal than the final books; in the preface to Samuel and Kings he vigorously defends the literalness of the translation. On the other hand Judges, one of the last books, is not far from being a paraphrase. Secondly, in the matter of style he was perfectly capable of flights of high rhetoric, but in his translation he deliberately avoids them: 'A version made for the use of the Church', he writes, 'even though it may possess a literary charm, ought to disguise it and avoid it so far as possible, in order that it may not speak to the idle schools and few disciples of the philosophers, but may address itself rather to the entire human race' (*Letter* 49.4). The translations are deliberately straightforward, retaining the bone-structure of the original Hebrew. This is the secret of the quiet dignity and lasting quality of his translation and of the distinctively Christian Latin he created.

The Vulgate later came to be regarded as one single book; this was not the case from the beginning. Just as Jerome produced them individually, so the biblical books often circulated independently. Cassiodorus (d. 580) already mentions a collection of all the books of the Bible in Jerome's translation (*Institutiones* 1.12.3), but the earliest manuscript we possess of the collection that became the standard Latin Vulgate is the *Codex Amiatinus*. Jerome's text was brought from Rome to Northumbrian monasteries, the furthest outpost of the Christian world, and transcribed into this Codex in the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow under the direction of Abbot Ceolfrid. This is an immense and valuable book (famously described by one researcher as the weight of a full-grown female Great Dane), and was taken by him to Rome for presentation to Pope Gregory II in 716. It consists of the following books in the 'Vulgate' translation:

1. The books of the Jewish Bible, translated from the Hebrew.
2. The 'Gallican' Psalter, revised from the Old Latin with some use of Hebrew.
3. Tobit and Judith, translated from the Aramaic (which Jerome called 'Chaldean').
4. Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, 1–2 Maccabees, Baruch, unrevised from the Old Latin.
5. The gospels in Jerome's early revision of the Old Latin.
6. The remainder of the New Testament, by unknown translators.

This was the Bible, largely but not wholly the work of Jerome, universally accepted by western Christianity until the end of the Middle Ages.

MEDIEVAL TRANSLATIONS

Medieval Europe was dominated linguistically by Latin, at any rate for the latter half of the first millennium. Latin was the language of courts, schools, the Church, indeed of civilized intercourse everywhere. King Alfred, as a sign of lack of education in England, instances the inability of the clergy to write in Latin. In his preface to the translation of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis* he writes that there are few south of the Humber who could translate a letter from Latin into English, and not many beyond the Humber. 'There were so few that I cannot think of a single one south of the Thames when I came to the throne.' Nevertheless it was unthinkable that there should be any sort of official version of the Bible in any language other than Latin, the language of the Church and of all its liturgy. Lack of understanding of the text of the Bible was supplemented by the living voice of Church teaching and by the luxuriant representation of biblical scenes in art, poetry and (later) drama. Translations were either helps for the ignorant or tools of instruction; there was never a suggestion that they should take the place of the official Latin text. It was only at the end of this period that the dominance thus given to the official teaching of the Church was felt to be a stranglehold, and independent access for all to the actual text of the Bible was perceived to be important. This was often associated with a heretical questioning of the Church's official teaching. Only a few illustrations of this, drawn from different parts of Europe, may be offered.

England

The tradition of paraphrase of the text, rather than translation, is enshrined in the poem of Caedmon and *The Dream of the Rood*. Bede recounts (*Hist. Eccl.* 5.24) how Caedmon, an unlettered labourer at the monastery of Whitby, was commanded in a dream to sing of the creation. His nine-line poem, marked by the strong rhythm and alliteration of Old English poetry, is, of course, derived from the account in Genesis; it is not in any sense a translation. The anonymous *Dream of the Rood* is another, longer (some 150 lines), triumphant masterpiece of Old English, in which the tree of the cross sings of its experience in bearing the warrior Saviour, a scintillating application of the Anglo-Saxon heroic tradition to the biblical story.

Besides these there is some mention of genuine translations. Bede on his deathbed in 735 is said to have completed his translation of the gospel of John, though Cuthbert says explicitly only that he translated the first six chapters; in any case none of this survives. William of Malmesbury tells that some two centuries later King Alfred translated the [first part](#) of the Psalter. The Anglo-Saxon prose translation of Psalms 1–50 in the *Paris Psalter* may represent his work.

Nevertheless there does not seem to have been any extensive translation of the Bible at this period. It was not until Aelfric of Winchester in 1010 that significant progress was made. In his preface to *Genesis* Aelfric writes of his reluctance to translate because of the danger of misunderstanding by the foolish. Here already is the attitude that for many centuries deprived the unlearned of the biblical text. Aelfric claims to be writing no more than the bare narrative, but his work must in fact have been a paraphrase, for he compressed the whole text of the four 'books of Kings'

into one homily. Progress towards a real translation comes in interlinear glosses rather than in independent translations of biblical material: over the marvellous Latin text of the Lindisfarne Gospels (written before 700) a ninth or tenth-century scribe has written the word-for-word equivalent in the Northumbrian dialect. A similar gloss on the gospel of Matthew exists in the Old Mercian dialect. An early copy of this was given to Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric (d. 1072). These may well be the earliest extant exemplars of a translation of the whole gospel into any vernacular language.

The Norman culture was sternly Latinate, without a vernacular culture, so that after the Norman Conquest English as a cultural medium went into a period of decline, from which it did not begin to emerge again until Chaucer gave it renewed literary standing. From the theological point of view the increasing sophistication of theology made theological thinking less and less accessible to laypeople. More and more it became the province of a group of clerical and university experts for whom knowledge of Latin was only one of the entry qualifications. This viewpoint is clear in the continuator of Knighton's *Chronicle* who wrote, soon after Wyclif's death, of 'the gospel that Christ gave to the clergy and doctors of the Church', complaining that by translation 'the pearl of the gospel is scattered abroad and trodden underfoot by swine'. Possession of a copy of a translation of scripture amounted almost to presumption of heresy, though special permission to own a copy was given to some pious laypeople, such as Anne of Bohemia, wife of Richard II, who died in 1394.

In England, particularly, suspicion that translation of the Bible carried the taint of heresy became deeper as a result of Wyclif and Lollardy, and indeed direct reliance on scripture was among the basic presuppositions of Wyclif's efforts to free the people from the tyranny of Church authority. Wyclif does not seem to have been responsible personally for the translations, although Jan Hus maintained that 'it is said that Wyclif translated the whole Bible from Latin into English'. There exists, however, a group of over 100 manuscripts of English translations, in at least five different hands (and showing some variation of dialect) from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries that clearly belong to this movement. The only name mentioned in the text as a translator is that of Nicholas of Hereford, who was certainly a follower of Wyclif, and was condemned with him at Oxford in 1382 (he subsequently recanted, and retired to a Carthusian monastery in 1417).

These translations can be subdivided into two groups, one of which is more literal, the other more free, readable and idiomatic. The latter version has been tentatively attributed to John Purvey (by Henry Hargreaves in Evans, Lampe and Greenslade 1963-70, 2: 410). It is significant that, just as Jerome earlier complained of the variety and corruption of the readings given in the Old Latin version, now the translator (in his *General Prologue*) complains of the need for correction in the common Latin Bibles available to him. The spread of these manuscripts shows that these translations were popular, perhaps as the only English versions available. Despite the prohibition (in the 1407 Constitutions of Oxford) of the translation of scripture into English 'whether in the time of John Wyclif or since' unless it is approved by the diocesan, they survived well into the sixteenth century, thought they were never diffused by the new invention of printing. In 1529 Sir Thomas More may well be

referring to these two groups of manuscripts when he differentiates between on the one hand the translation of the 'great arch-heretic Wyclif' who 'purposely corrupted the holy text' and on the other 'Bibles fair and old written in English which have been known and seen by the bishop of the diocese'.

Germany

The situation in England has its parallels also in German-speaking lands. Here translation seems to have occurred first as a means of study. The psalms were the stuff of Christian prayer, sung daily in countless religious communities; it was therefore important that the beginner should understand them. Just as the Psalter was the [first part](#) of the Bible translated into Anglo-Saxon, so the monk and teacher Notker Labeo of Sankt Gallen made an interlinear gloss of the Psalter into German about 1000. Other translations of the Psalter in the Benedictine monastic schools were probably associated with the schooling of novices (e.g. as suggested by fragments already from the ninth century in the Abbey of Reichenau). Similarly in the twelfth century such fragmentary translations, whose exact rendering of the Latin words suggests school use, have been found in convents of Dominican sisters and Cistercians. An important new step was taken in the fourteenth century in the great work of Marchwart Biberli (c. 1265–1330), the Dominican Lector of Zurich, who translated first the Psalter and then the whole Bible. His work is both exact and poetic, though his aims were primarily devotional and educational. His care was principally for students and religious in Zurich itself, and copies appear only in the Zurich area until 1360. His work never benefited from the new invention of printing, though it was widely diffused by the workshop of Diebolt Laubers from c. 1440.

Eastern Europe

Christianity was brought to the Slav countries (more specifically Moravia or, in more recent nomenclature, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia) from Constantinople by the brothers Cyril and Methodius. They saw the importance of translation into the vernacular. There was as yet no writing or alphabet, and they immediately set about forming the alphabet now called Glagolitic or Cyrillic. In the teeth of opposition from the episcopate to the west of them, in Bavaria, they succeeded in obtaining permission in 869 from Pope Hadrian II to celebrate the liturgy in Slavonic; the scriptural readings were to be proclaimed first in Latin, then in Slavonic. So, while in western Europe Bible translation originated as an educational help, in eastern Europe the origin of translation of the Bible into Slavonic was liturgical.

The *Vita Constantini* (Cyril's original name was Constantine) says that he began to write the gospels down in Slavonic with the first verse of John, but modern opinion (Metzger 1977: p 401) is that this was more probably only a homily on John 1.1. According to the *Vita Methodii* Methodius translated the whole Bible into Slavonic in the six months March to October 884. Again, it is hard to envisage that he completed this vast task in so short a time, and these were probably only liturgical extracts; in any case, the translation is not extant. A century later, however, the *Codex Zographensis* does contain the four gospels in Glagolitic script. The full

translation of the Bible into Church Slavonic had to wait for the work of Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod, shortly before 1500.

RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

In the early sixteenth century two new factors became operative, the new learning and the new theology. The rediscovery of the classical languages had gathered pace in Italy during the fifteenth century, and soon spread to northern Europe. This included Hebrew as well as Greek. In Italy Hebrew Bibles had been printed as early as 1480. In Spain a professor of Hebrew had been appointed in 1508, and by 1517 the Complutensian Polyglot Bible (including a Hebrew text and analysis) was published. In 1506 Reuchlin's Hebrew grammar, *De Rudimentis Hebraicis*, was published in Germany. England hung a little behind. When John Fisher founded St John's College, Cambridge, in 1511, he provided that Hebrew as well as Greek should be studied there, and in 1524 a Hebrew lecturer was appointed, in the person of Robert Wakefield. In 1519 Erasmus was writing to the President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford (with typical flattery), that Corpus was *inter praecipua decora Britanniae* on account of its *bibliotheca trilinguis* (1982, Letter 990). On the other hand, just how far Oxford was lagging behind shows from the fact that in the 1537 catalogue of the College library, Reuchlin is still the only Hebrew book mentioned.

The study of Greek also proceeded apace, and monastic students of Magdalene College, Cambridge, were embellishing the walls with Greek graffiti before 1500. The enormously significant event was the publication in 1516 of Erasmus's hastily edited first printed edition of the New Testament. In some ecclesiastical circles, for whom the Vulgate provided a sufficient Bible, it was greeted with a puzzled lack of enthusiasm; but this and its extensive revisions would provide a means of significant advance.

The second factor affecting translation of the Bible was the new theology. The provision of a vernacular text of the Bible was seen by the Protestant reformers as a vital factor in the liberation of the Christian message from the thrall of ecclesiastical tyranny. Erasmus (who never committed himself to the reform) wrote in the preface to the first edition of his Greek New Testament, 'I could wish even all women to read the gospel and the epistles of Paul, and that the farmer may sing parts of them at his work, and the weaver may chant them when engaged at his shuttle and the traveller with their stories beguile the weariness of the journey.' About the same time and in the same vein (perhaps even with conscious reminiscence) occurred the famous conversation of William Tyndale, quoted in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*:

Master Tyndale happened to be in the company of a certain divine, recounted for a learned man, and in communing and disputing with him he drave him to that issue, that the said great doctor burst out into these blasphemous words, and said, 'We were better to be without God's laws than the pope's.' Master Tyndale, hearing this, full of godly zeal and not bearing that blasphemous saying, replied again and said, 'I defy the pope and all his laws', and further added that, if God spared him life, ere many years he would cause the boy that driveth the plough to know more of scripture than he did.

Germany

Martin Luther had the advantages and impetus of both these factors. He early made use of the advance in classical learning. His lectures on Romans in 1515/16 reflect knowledge of Greek and those on the letter to the Hebrews in 1517/18 knowledge of Hebrew. So already in 1522 he published a New Testament, which he had worked from Erasmus's Greek with the advice of Philipp Melanchthon, one of the most distinguished Greek scholars of the Renaissance, and professor of Greek at Wittenberg. In the following year he made a start on the Old Testament, with the Pentateuch. His Bible was not finished until 1534; its effect was immediate and striking. The desire for such a translation is shown by the whirlwind spread of the work: within three years the New Testament had been translated into Dutch, Danish and Swedish. It has been calculated that by 1533 on average one in every ten German households possessed a copy of his New Testament. The Catholic reaction is also indicative of the grip Luther's work immediately exerted, for in quick succession Catholic translations by Emser (1527), Dietenberger (1527) and Eck (1537) appeared, though in fact they were heavily dependent on Luther's own translation. Now for the first time the Bible became part of the German literary heritage. The cadences, rhythms and vocabulary of Luther's Bible became part not only of German Protestantism but also of the whole linguistic treasury.

England

In England the crucial work of translating the Bible was initiated by William Tyndale. In 1522 he offered his services as a translator to Bishop Tunstall of London but was turned away on the grounds that the bishop had no place for him in his household. Soon afterwards he emigrated to Flanders, and there set about his work of translating. After a mere two years, in 1526 his first New Testament, translated from the Greek (a revised version was published in 1534), arrived in England. As it reached the docks it was seized by the Bishop of London and burnt.

Enough copies got through to make further action necessary, and in 1528 Tunstall commissioned the learned Thomas More, himself a humanist and friend of Erasmus, to counter-attack. This More did in his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, which appeared in June 1529. More characterized Tyndale variously as 'a hell-hound in the kennel of the devil' and 'a drowsy drudge drinking deep in the devil's dregs' (Daniell 1994: 277). More's animosity was surely aroused chiefly by Tyndale's theological glosses rather than by the translation itself, for they were polemically Lutheran. On the surface, however, More's objection was to terms used by Tyndale to avoid what he called 'juggled and feigned terms', Latinate terms, which for More represented the hallowed legacy of Christendom. Thus for 'priest' Tyndale read 'elder' (or 'senior'), for 'charity', 'love', for 'grace', 'favour', for 'penance', 'repentance'.

Nothing daunted, Tyndale set about working on the Old Testament too, and in 1530 the first five books were completed. Two elements combined to make this translation the unique work that it is. The first is Tyndale's extraordinary grasp of language and his determination to make the text both readable and intelligible, the second his knowledge and use of Hebrew.

The dominant characteristics of Tyndale's translation are an incomparable freshness and directness, so that the debt of the English language to Tyndale is immense. His achievement cannot be analysed here in detail. The reader can only be encouraged to compare the accounts of the Creation and the Fall in Genesis 1–3 with the Wyclifite version to see its genius. Indeed from many points of view subsequent versions have failed to improve on it at all. Tyndale's rhythms still haunt the language, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us'. There were biblical expressions for which no English equivalent existed. He invented such words as 'scapegoat' and 'passover'. Any number of expressions that have become proverbial were his: 'the powers that be', 'the fat of the land', 'eat, drink and be merry'.

The second element that made Tyndale's translation different, this time the Old Testament, was the use of Hebrew. It was no doubt Tyndale's move to the continent that gave him the necessary contact with Hebrew. He taught himself Hebrew, but also made considerable use of Luther's Bible translated from the Hebrew. He was, however, only about halfway through the Old Testament when he was kidnapped and imprisoned by the Catholic authorities in the Netherlands. Even from his dank prison cell Tyndale was sending letters to the governor, begging for Hebrew Bible, dictionary and grammar. In 1534 he was cruelly garrotted. His work did not die with him. A couple of years later (1537) 'Matthew's Bible' was published in England by Tyndale's friend John Roger. It contained Tyndale's translations but did not use his name; ironically it was licensed by Henry VIII.

Nearly a century later, in 1611, the King James Version, the 'authorized version' of the Bible, and the basis for virtually all modern English versions, was issued – an event that has been described as the coming of age of the Church of England. This also relies heavily on Tyndale – up to 80 per cent in those parts he had translated. In fact this Bible does not seem finally to have been authorized by anyone, but at least it was one of the first acts of King James I to initiate its composition, and he himself played a considerable part in organizing the six panels of translators involved. Nevertheless, it is no exaggeration to say that the achievement of this version is Tyndale's. The nobility, rhythm, freshness and even wit of this translation are his: 'Then said the serpent unto the woman, "Tush, ye shall not die."' Where the King James Version does change Tyndale, it often shies away from his imaginative, daring version; the serpent's enticement fades to 'Ye shall not surely die'. Similarly the lively 'the woman saw it was a good tree to eat of and lusty unto the eyes' is softened to the pedestrian 'the woman saw that the tree was good for food and a tree to be desired'.

The Catholic reaction

The Catholic reaction to this work of translation varied from country to country. It was always inspired by a certain protectiveness, a conviction that the text alone is only part of the story, and that it must be read as part of the living tradition. Thus even today Catholic translations are not authorized without some explanatory notes. The disfavour Bible translation suffered in the predominantly Catholic countries of Europe has meant that in these countries translations of the Bible have had markedly less influence on the formation of the language than in England and Germany.

So in 1551 and again in 1559 the Spanish Inquisition banned any translation of the Bible into 'Castilian or any other vulgar tongue'. Consequently the first translation of the Bible into Spanish, by the ex-religious Cassiodoro da Reyna, was printed not in Spain but in Protestant Basel in 1569, 'so that the common people should not be deprived of the Word of God', as he says in his introduction. When it was revised by Cipriano de Valera, to become the translation standard in Spanish-speaking countries until this century, the New Testament was printed in London in 1596 and the whole Bible in 1602 in Amsterdam. The circulation of translations in Spain was always restricted, dependent largely on the anti-clericalism of the government. The story of George Borrow's travels in Spain to disseminate the Bible in the vernacular is a classic of English literature.

Similarly in Italian the standard Protestant Bible was a translation by Giovanni Deodati, professor of theology at Geneva (1607). A Catholic translation (by A. Martini from the Latin Vulgate) was, however, authorized in 1778. The extreme case is perhaps Ireland, for the first authorized Catholic translation of the Bible into Irish was not published until 1985.

For English-speaking Catholics the counterblast to the classic Protestant translations stemming from Tyndale consisted in the Rheims-Douai version of Gregory Martin. The New Testament was published at Rheims in 1582, the Old Testament at Douai in 1609. Translated from the Vulgate, it was heavily Latinized, a style modernized by Bishop Challoner's revision in 1749-63. This remained the standard Catholic version until it was superseded in America by a short-lived version sponsored by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (1941) and in England by the brilliant but quirky version of Ronald A. Knox. This too was translated nominally from the Vulgate, though in 1944 I witnessed Knox using also the Greek and Hebrew texts.

MODERN ENGLISH BIBLES

For over three centuries the English-speaking world seemed to be content more or less with the translations of the sixteenth century, the King James Version and (in Roman Catholic circles) the Rheims-Douai version. This had been completed by Gregory Martin in 1582 and thoroughly revised by Bishop Challoner in 1749-50. Apart from this revision the most important biblical revision was the Revised Version of 1870-85. This was intended to incorporate the advances in textual knowledge and other biblical sciences, but the decision to preserve the language of the King James Version resulted in a wooden and antiquarian translation that failed to win a place in the heart of English readers.

It was only after the Second World War that a proliferation of translations of the Bible into English occurred. Several factors contributed to this explosion. The archaeological, literary and textual studies of the previous century had begun to trickle down beyond the merely academic world. There was a renewed impetus in Christianity not only to expunge the shame felt at the atrocities of war but also to counter the opposition of secularism, atheism and Communism. Popular interest in the origins of Christianity was further aroused by sensationalist claims following the discovery in 1945 of the Nag Hammadi writings and in 1946 of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Among the many available, the profile of four versions will here be sketched.

The first of the new translations to appear was the Revised Standard Version (RSV), commissioned in 1937 and completed in 1952. Despite being the work of American scholars, it has become fully accepted on both sides of the Atlantic as a dignified and accurate translation, being widely used both in public reading and for academic work. A number of archaisms (such as 'saith') and Semitisms (such as 'and it came to pass that') have been eliminated, and 'thou' is retained only for addressing God (not Jesus, which causes some theological problems). A revision, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989) has caused controversy, and failed to win acceptance in some circles, by its uncompromising use of inclusive language, to the extent of changing singulars into plurals ('their' avoids 'his/her') and the addition to 'brothers' of 'and sisters'. The storytelling of the Old Testament is often scintillating, and a number of the solutions to translation problems can only be described as brilliant, but there remains a certain staidness about it that betrays it still as a revision of a revision of the King James Version.

The RSV was closely followed by the Roman Catholic Jerusalem Bible in 1966, the first translation into fully modern English, the work of a distinguished literary panel under the editorship of Alexander Jones. The parent *Bible de Jérusalem* was begun in 1946 at the French Catholic Biblical School in Jerusalem, and was intended to incorporate the important advances in Roman Catholic biblical scholarship this century. The books, copiously annotated and introduced, were published first in separate fascicules over ten years. The English Jerusalem Bible, having no basis in a traditional English version, has the freshness of freedom from traditional biblical language. For Catholics it rapidly supplanted the antiquated Rheims–Douai version. Perhaps the most controversial feature was the use of 'Yahweh' for the divine name, which was excoriated as a reversion to a mere local, tribal deity. It was basically a translation from the French *Bible de Jérusalem*, conceived primarily to convey to the English-speaking world the biblical scholarship of this French Bible; the translation of the text was originally no more than a vehicle for the notes. The New Jerusalem Bible, published 1985, was edited by the present writer. The notes and introductions were brought up to date, and the accuracy of the translation considerably improved, some books being translated completely afresh. It was the first complete Bible to make consistent use of inclusive language wherever possible, though without the rigour of the NRSV.

In France, however, the *Bible de Jérusalem* had its own special importance. After centuries of division between Protestants and Catholics over translations of the Bible, following the Second Vatican Council (1962–6), in 1968 agreement was reached between the Vatican and the United Bible Societies over a set of principles for translation. Following these principles the *Bible de Jérusalem* formed the basis for the first French ecumenical version of the Bible, the *Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible*. In Germany also the *Einheitsübersetzung* was launched jointly by a Catholic cardinal and a Protestant bishop in 1980. In the French- and German-speaking countries respectively these two translations now hold the field with little competition. No such agreement has yet been reached in English-speaking lands.

The New English Bible, initiated by the Church of Scotland in 1946 and completed in 1970, was an attempt to break away from the mould of 'biblical English' associated with the tradition stemming from Tyndale. It also deliberately

eschewed any effort consistently to translate the same word in the original Greek or Hebrew by the same English word. There is an impressive freshness and modernity about this version that reflects the eagerness of the translators to bring home the meaning of the text to a reader unused to the traditional language of the Bible. Some of the solutions to translation problems are breathtakingly apt, though the avoidance of all Semitic 'biblical' language has sometimes led to accusations of paraphrase rather than translation. It was revised as the Revised English Bible (REB) in 1989, with participation (at least notional) from the Bible Society and most of the mainstream Churches of the British Isles. This united ecclesiastical participation has not, however, enabled it to overcome all competition; indeed the REB is not one of the versions authorized for use in Roman Catholic churches.

Among the most widely used versions is the Good News Bible (completed 1976), sponsored by the American Bible Society, prepared by the United Bible Society and published on both sides of the Atlantic in slightly different versions. The British subtitle, *Today's Good News*, reflects its purpose accurately, for dignity and literary quality have been sacrificed to the desire to make the Bible accessible to those whose English is less sophisticated. It is a determined effort to move out of the biblical world and culture ('the Covenant Box' replaces 'the Ark of the Covenant'), even to the extent of tabulating or condensing into a few phrases verses judged unimportant (e.g. Numbers 7.12–88). The price paid is a certain loss of richness and imagery, when God's 'right hand' and his 'mighty arm' become simply his 'power'. This version certainly has its uses as a first introduction to the Bible for children and those for whom English is a second language. It is the only major Bible illustrated throughout, richly and aptly, with thoughtful and witty line-drawings, which combine humour with reverence.

NON-EUROPEAN TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

The whole situation of translation of the Bible into modern languages changed radically with the advent of the missionary movement of Christianity, first with the sixteenth-century Jesuit missions to the Far East, then with the opening up of North America and of the Indian subcontinent by the East India Companies, and finally with the discovery of sub-Saharan Africa. Translation of the Bible has been an essential element in the missionary movement. There are perhaps two poles of this translation. The first is where the Bible is an instrument of preliminary evangelization. There is no spreading of Christianity without some version of the gospel, though there are today regions (e.g. northern Namibia) where ministers have to provide their own oral rendering, and others (e.g. the southern Philippines) where missionaries are still preparing a first written translation. The other pole is when Christianity has reached sufficient maturity for the indigenous speakers of a language to provide, or at least co-operate in providing, a lasting translation. The problems are made vastly greater than for translation into European languages by the need to move into another thought-world, far removed from the Mediterranean culture that is at the basis of western civilization. Gestures, colours, climatic features, marriage-customs, images may carry entirely different overtones (the spirits have a different function

in African religions from that of the Spirit in Judaeo-Christian thought), though certain tribal or nomadic conditions in some areas may also make elements of the Old Testament world far more accessible than they are to modern western peoples.

Catholic stress on the living tradition of teaching, and mistrust of the unsupervised reading of the Bible, meant that less priority was given to biblical translation by Catholic than by Protestant missionaries. Remarkable among the early missions to the Far East were the Jesuit missions to China and Japan, for to them provision of a vernacular Bible was not a priority. Amid considerable production of books and of Christian literature, it simply does not seem to have occurred to them that a Bible should be included. In 1604 the awesome polyglot Plantin edition of the Bible in eight volumes was brought to China in its own packing-case, but Matteo Ricci refused all requests to translate it, on the grounds that special permission would be required from the Pope (Cronin 1955: 216). It is striking that from 1590 to 1610 the Jesuit presses at Kyushu produced a whole series of catechetical and devotional books in Japanese, prayerbooks, Thomas à Kempis, lives of saints, the Exercises of St Ignatius, dictionaries. But neither a Bible nor even a New Testament is listed among the considerable number of books known to have been produced there (Satow 1888), though the Jesuits are said to have produced a complete New Testament (now lost) in Japanese in 1613. Similarly in Africa, though 'Protestant vernacular Bibles had multiplied across the continent before the close of the [nineteen] century, Catholic ones were simply non-existent' (Hastings 1990: 281).

Consequently it is to a Dutch Protestant, and a merchant in the Dutch East India Company, that falls the honour of the first known extended biblical translation into a non-European language: Albert Cornelius Ruyl translated the gospel of Matthew into Malay in 1629. It was similarly a Dutch merchant, Bartholomaeus Ziegelbalg, who was responsible for the first translation into Tamil in 1715. The first printed translation into a North American language was John Eliot's for the Mohican Indians of Massachusetts (1663).

The evangelical revival in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century was a particularly potent force for spreading the biblical text around the expanding British Empire. The Baptist missionary William Carey at Seranpur in 1800–33 oversaw the translation of the Bible into Bengali, Mahratta, Tamil and altogether 26 Indian languages. The most powerful manifestation of the evangelical movement, however, was the foundation of the Bible Societies. The first of these, the British and Foreign Bible Society, was formed (1804) at a meeting at the London Tavern in Bishopsgate, strangely enough initially in response to a demand for Bibles in Welsh. The cry was raised that if this was possible in the British Isles, why not to the whole of the British Empire, indeed to the whole world? The Society was deliberately lay and interdenominational, with a committee consisting of 15 Anglican and 15 Free Church laymen, afforced by 6 representatives of European Churches, and pledged to distribute Bibles 'without note or comment'. Within a decade Bible Societies had been formed in Germany, Russia, Greece, the United States and many other countries, as independent offshoots of the parent Society. These societies were instrumental in translating the Bible into the languages to which Christianity was spreading through the burgeoning missionary movement. Thus, to take only two examples, in 1806, Bibles in Spanish were taken to Buenos Aires 'probably for the

first time in the history of South America' (Roe 1965: 11). In 1812 Robert Morrison secured the post of interpreter to the East India Company and began the translation of the Bible into Chinese, in the hope that China would soon be opened to Christian missionaries.

This work was carried on with impressive zeal and perseverance. By the time of the Golden Jubilee of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1854 it was reckoned that 28 million copies of scripture had been distributed in 152 languages and dialects. In 1997 the Bible Society (as it had been renamed) claimed translation of the whole Bible into 349 languages and dialects, and individual books into 2,123 languages. In 1995 they distributed 560 million Bibles or parts of Bibles. They reckoned that there still remained some 4,000 languages without any scripture.

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CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

MODERN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION



William R. Telford

INTRODUCTION

The nature, scope and complexity of modern biblical interpretation and its subject matter

Modern biblical interpretation is a complex and multifaceted enterprise. Its subject matter, a collection of some sixty-six writings (thirty-nine in the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament, as Christians call it, and twenty-seven in the New Testament), displays remarkable variety and diversity. Dating from a millennium before the birth of Christianity's founder to approximately a century and a half after, these writings present us with history, literature and theology, with legends, sagas and stories, with proverbs, songs and poems, with prophecy, apocalyptic and wisdom, with gospels, epistles and apocalypses as well as a host of other historical, literary and theological forms and genres. Created, preserved and transmitted by ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean societies, and cherished as sacred by Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities, these sixty-six writings have exerted a profound influence on Western culture and civilization. Modern biblical interpretation in all its many forms recognizes this diversity, and its own wide-ranging agenda reflects the complexity of its subject matter and the multifarious levels at which, and the multitudinous ways in which, the Bible itself may be interpreted.

Any biblical text has a variety of contexts within which it may be understood and interpreted, and within which it achieves its meaning and significance (Bauckham 1989: 13–15). It may be examined in relation to its original context and interrogated with respect to the meaning intended by its author(s). It may be investigated in relation to the literary context in which it is found, either in terms of the specific literary unit(s) within which it is placed, or, more broadly, with respect to the general literary tradition within which it stands (its genre). In pursuing the original context, the biblical interpreter may be concerned to illuminate the immediate historical circumstances of the author and his community or readership, or the text may be viewed within the wider social, political, economic, cultural and religious context of the writer's own day. The text may also acquire meaning and significance through its theological context, either with respect to the particular religious

tradition or history of ideas which it reflects or engages, or with respect to its place in a unified body of sacred writings (the canon). Biblical texts also have a history of interpretation and reception, and contexts other than the original one(s) have also contributed to their meaning for the reader. Modern biblical interpretation is interested in these secondary contexts also (the text's use in literature, for example, or in liturgy), recognizing that the meaning of a biblical text is influenced by the perspective of the readers who construct meaning from it in line with their own presuppositions or world-view, or within the context of the interpretative communities (church, synagogue, academy) whose exegetical traditions shape its reception.

The aims of the chapter

In this chapter, it will not be my purpose to provide a detailed or even comprehensive introduction to modern biblical interpretation and its many different individual methods and approaches, or to outline the history of biblical interpretation in the past (my definition of the term 'modern' will be restricted for the most part to developments in the last quarter of the twentieth century). The reader should consult some of the standard reference works in this area (Morgan and Barton 1988; Coggins and Houlden 1990; Thiselton 1992). Rather, my aim will be to offer some general reflections (some autobiographical) on the current state of biblical interpretation, on the nature and scope of contemporary biblical hermeneutics and on the major paradigms, and the principal methods and approaches that have been in operation in this period. More specifically, I shall direct my remarks to what may be perceived, especially by those stepping into this field for the first time (though no less so by biblical scholars themselves!), as the bewildering array of such methodological tools and approaches. I shall attempt to offer some definitions of these methods and approaches and try to identify their respective aims and limitations and their varying concerns, perspectives and assumptions. A basic taxonomy of approaches will be proffered, and some key issues engaged. A central one will be whether the methodological pluralism that characterizes modern biblical interpretation betokens refinement, complementarity, confusion or even fragmentation within the discipline of biblical studies. The final section of the chapter will comment on some of the methodological issues in two of the biblical fields with which I myself am most familiar, namely, historical Jesus studies and Markan studies.

Biblical hermeneutics: methods, criticisms, interpretations, approaches and theologies

But first, let me offer some definitions. The term 'hermeneutics' (from the Greek *hermeneuo* meaning 'I understand' or 'I interpret') refers to the science (some prefer to call it an 'art') or theory of interpretation. Scholars and students entering the field of modern biblical interpretation and engaged in the pursuit of meaning encounter a veritable forest of '-ics' (e.g. 'linguistics', 'semantics'), '-isms' (e.g. 'structuralism', 'new historicism') or '-ologies' (e.g. 'etymology', 'philology'), and a formidable host of 'methods' (e.g. 'the historical-critical method'), 'criticisms' (e.g. 'redaction criticism', 'rhetorical criticism', 'canonical criticism'), 'interpretations' (e.g. 'feminist interpreta-

tion', 'Marxist interpretation' or 'materialist interpretation'), 'approaches' (e.g. 'allegorical approaches', 'literary approaches', 'sociological approaches'), 'theologies' (e.g. 'black theology', 'narrative theology', 'pastoral theology') or even 'exegeses' (e.g. 'Jewish exegesis'). Some of these '-ics', '-isms' or '-ologies' form themselves into cognate areas of investigation within a particular science. Linguistics, for example, the science of language, embraces such divisions as semiotics, a method of enquiry that concerns itself with 'signs' as forms of verbal or non-verbal communication, or semantics, which investigates the meaning of 'words', or (comparative) philology, which seeks to establish the meaning of words within their original or historical context, or etymology, which is concerned with the 'root-meanings' of words, or structuralism, which searches for the permanent 'deep structures' of language itself, the universal grammar and syntax of the communicating mind.

What distinguishes the many 'methods', 'criticisms', 'interpretations', 'approaches', 'theologies' or 'exegeses' are the different questions they address to their subject matter, the different aims they pursue, the different assumptions they make, the different perspectives they share, the different concerns they embrace, and the different methodologies they adopt. 'Methodology' is a key word in modern biblical interpretation. It refers to the rational strategies, method(s) or procedure(s) scholars agree to adopt with respect to the aims and objectives of their chosen field of activity, including the criteria by which they will evaluate their results in the interests of the widest possible consensus. A 'method' can be distinguished to a certain extent from an 'approach' in that it often involves distinct procedures, steps or operations performed on the subject matter for investigation in pursuance of specific aims, whereas an 'approach' is often characterized more by the particular concerns, perspectives or point of view it adopts towards the text (or reader).

Form criticism is a method, for example, that proceeds by first identifying and classifying the 'forms' or stereotypical units of tradition (sayings or narratives) that circulated orally in the community (e.g. parables, miracle stories, etc.) before being incorporated into the written text, then assigning them a 'life-situation' (*Sitz im Leben*) or function within the community (worship, parenesis, catechesis, apologetic, polemic, etc.) and finally making a historical judgement on the origin (or authenticity) of each form in the light of the degree of development it evinces in both the oral and literary traditions. Feminist interpretation, on the other hand, is more of an approach to the biblical text, one sensitive to the representation of women in the Bible, which is concerned to uncover its androcentric or patriarchal bias, which aims to expose derogatory images of women or highlight complimentary ones. In directing itself to the role and status of women in the Bible, feminist interpretation may itself employ a variety of methods, whether traditio-critical (e.g. source, form or redaction criticism) or literary (e.g. rhetorical criticism or narrative criticism), or it may draw upon a variety of other approaches, for example, social-scientific (anthropological or sociological), (socio-)psychological or other culturally informed approaches.

Among the important historical-critical methods utilized by modern biblical scholars, in addition to those already mentioned, are textual criticism, which seeks to establish, by a series of logical procedures, and from a number of variant readings, the original form of a text; or source criticism, which is concerned to discover,

on the basis of a number of criteria (e.g. unevenness or incoherence in the text, interruption of the context, repetition or duplication of material, inconsistencies or discrepancies, etc.), whether the author has used sources; or tradition criticism, which concentrates on certain constituent elements of a text (a motif, concept, theme or combination of these), and seeks to establish the tradition history of this element prior to its incorporation into the text.

Among the significant literary methods are composition criticism, which examines the text as a whole to determine how it was composed, what factors or concerns governed or motivated its composition, and what compositional techniques and devices were used by its writer(s); or genre criticism, which seeks to identify, by comparison with other writings with similar traits, the category, type or genre into which the text may be placed (e.g. history, biography, tragedy, romance, letter, apocalypse, etc.) as an aid to the overall determination of its meaning; or reader-response criticism, which investigates the reading process itself, and the ways in which readers construct meaning from a text by paying close attention to the clues or coded signals within a text (gaps, ambiguities, discrepancies, opacity, irony, repetitions, intertextual allusions, unanswered questions, the use of 'reliable commentary', etc.).

'Approaches' may sometimes lack such finely tuned precision but are frequently characterized by their commitment to a particular interpretative framework, a set of general principles or a specific dimension within which the text, they claim, should be viewed. Historical approaches tend to look 'behind' the text, to locate its meaning in the past, to see the clue to its interpretation in its original context, and in the intention of its original author(s). 'Historicism' indeed is '[t]he belief that history holds the keys to human existence and self-understanding originates here' (Morgan 1990: 290). An historical approach like that of the History of Religion(s), for example, which was particularly influential in the first half of the last century, is characterized not only by its strict adherence to historical methodology but more so by its absolute rejection of theological or dogmatic presuppositions, and by its comparative analysis of the external religious matrix (Jewish, Hellenistic and oriental religions and cultures), which is deemed to have influenced biblical religion and to account, in particular, for the evolution of New Testament Christianity. Literary approaches, on the other hand, tend to 'deal with the text in its final form rather than with its genesis, and are concerned with the literary world projected "in front of" the text rather than with the historical world "behind" the text' (Brown and Schneiders 1989: 1160).

Ethical approaches view the biblical text through a moral lens, looking at it with a view to the ethical teaching it presents, or the ethical perspectives it reflects, examining its normative structures, its standards of judgement, its treatment of right and wrong or good and evil and so on. Such approaches also examine the consequences that biblical ethics have had for both past and contemporary society, how they have impinged upon moral choices and shaped individual and social conscience. Ecological approaches, for example, have concentrated upon biblical attitudes to nature, the environment, creation, and on matters of human responsibility flowing therefrom, while moral criticism has not hesitated to apply moral judgements to biblical texts themselves in relation to their effects (e.g. in promoting anti-Semitism, imperialism, exclusivism or sexism).

Ethical approaches overlap with ideological approaches, whose major thrust is to examine the Bible as an ideological system whose informing world-view(s) or nexus of governing ideas also have a relation to social, political and economic realities. Liberationist approaches are characterized by their focus on certain central biblical themes such as 'justice and oppression', 'wealth and poverty', 'freedom and slavery', 'power and weakness', while materialist interpretation seeks to explain such central ideas in relation to the social formations, political structures and economic systems underlying them. The latter draws very heavily on Marxist interpretation with its highlighting of the ways that religious and theological ideas may be used to legitimate these realities.

Ideological approaches overlap in turn with theological approaches whose essential characteristic is their engagement with what they regard as the major subject matter of the biblical text, namely, its communication of 'divine' realities or of 'heavenly things' (John 3.12), and hence its revelatory significance for faith. One particularly extreme but popular form of biblical interpretation is fundamentalism, which is characterized by its dogmatic adherence to the literal meaning of the text, or perhaps, more accurately, its view of biblical inerrancy (Barr 1981; Corner 1990). But there are also more moderate theological approaches, and within this category, too, are to be counted the various confessional and devotional approaches to the Bible, with their interest in 'spirituality' and other existential concerns and their conviction that the Bible is a sacred text not only to be interpreted but also to be appropriated and applied.

Developing out of these theological approaches, and building on some of the methods mentioned above are a number of important 'theologies'. A 'theology' is a 'reflective, analytic, abstract discipline which seeks to formulate a carefully conceptualized account of ultimate truths regarding God and his relationship with the world in the light of the ways of thought which characterize the academic thinking of the day' (Goldingay 1990: 692). Some of these theologies build on historical-critical approaches and methods (e.g. 'historical theology'). Some give priority to the literary study of the Bible, as with 'narrative theology', which focuses on the use of stories as a structuring device in human experience, and employs the methods and results of narrative criticism. Some of these 'theologies' are purely 'descriptive' or 'evaluative', as with 'historical theology', or as with certain forms of 'biblical theology', that is, they see it as their task to identify, analyse, contextualize (historically) and even systematize, as objectively as possible, the theological features of the text, but with no further theological agenda. Other forms of 'biblical theology' are 'actualizing', which means that they see it as 'a discipline involving normative authority, personal commitment, and interpretation for the present day and the modern religious community' (Barr 1999: esp. 6, 9, 15).

This aim to link the concerns of academic biblical scholarship with the needs of the religious community (compare canonical criticism) is seen, for example, in 'pastoral theology' with its interest in the value and use of the Bible in areas of personal growth, or pastoral care, or in teaching and preaching (homiletics). Some 'theologies' that attempt to be both critical and confessional represent or address particular constituencies, such as liberation theology with its concern for oppressed communities, and its interpretation of biblical concepts such as 'sin', 'judgment',

'faith' or 'salvation' in collective or institutional terms rather than personal ones. It is out of this movement that some of the so-called 'people's' or 'grass roots' approaches have come, approaches that emphasize the 'actualization' of biblical interpretation within 'base communities' of the disprivileged, or that promote the value of the Bible in the advancement of a human-rights culture (Mesters 1983; Botha 1996). Other 'theologies' seek to interpret the Bible in relation to specific classes of the 'oppressed', black theology, for example, offering exegesis in the light of the black experience, feminist theology with the needs and aspirations of women in mind.

The major paradigms (historical, literary, theological)

In the face of this plethora of methods, criticisms, interpretations, approaches and theologies, it is very easy to get confused or disoriented. One analytical category that has helped to create some order within the hermeneutical chaos is the concept of the 'paradigm'. A paradigm can be described as 'any idea or set of ideas that provides the framework within which a given set of phenomena is understood' (Robertson 1976: 547). In the field of biblical interpretation, three paradigms can be identified, namely, the historical paradigm, the literary paradigm and the theological paradigm. The Bible, in other words, can be viewed as history, as literature or as theology. From one perspective, the biblical texts are historical documents, which by careful analysis can yield information about the past. From another perspective, they are literary compositions and hence subject to all the possibilities and limitations that written self-expression involves, including multiple interpretations. From yet another perspective, they are religious (or sacred) texts, seeking to express a relation to what is perceived as the divine.

Associated with these three broad perspectives, there is a series of concomitant aims, principles and assumptions, and generated by them are the various hermeneutical tools I have described. Most, if not all, of the above methods and approaches, indeed, can be seen to pursue certain aspects of an agenda appropriate to one or more of these paradigms. According to its practitioners, the historical paradigm, put simply, offers us a window into the past, the literary paradigm a window into the imagination (or the nature of language), and the theological paradigm into the mind of God himself (or herself, if we allow ourselves to be influenced by feminist theology). As a rough guide through the hermeneutical maze, these three paradigms are extremely helpful, although they bring with them certain dangers. There is the obvious danger of oversimplification, for there are overlapping elements in each of these paradigms, as with the methods and approaches deriving from them. There is also the danger of what I might call 'paradigmatic imperialism', the prevailing tendency for followers of any one of these paradigms to subsume the others within its own perspective, or to declare the others illegitimate or obsolete. Examples, perhaps, of the rigorous application of a single perspective might be 'historicism', with respect to the historical paradigm, 'structuralism', with respect to the literary paradigm, and 'fundamentalism', with respect to the theological paradigm.

Modern biblical interpretation in historical perspective

For the majority of the centuries in which biblical interpretation has been practised, the theological paradigm has been most in evidence. For Judaism, Christianity and Islam the Bible has been (and still is) a holy book. Despite the critical (and at times iconoclastic) scholarship permitted in the Judaeo-Christian tradition (though markedly less so in the Muslim tradition of interpretation), it has been regarded as a fountain of revealed truth or divine learning. While the historical or 'literal' meaning was recognized as a dimension in itself by ancient exegetes, contradictions at this 'surface' level were frequently taken as signals pointing to the 'deeper' spiritual or theological significance of the text as revealed to the enlightened by the allegorical approaches then in vogue.

From the eighteenth century onwards, the historical paradigm has been dominant in the field of biblical studies, although there have been signs in the last quarter of the twentieth century that things are changing (Watson 1994). When I first began my own postgraduate work, in Cambridge, in 1972, the historical-critical method was clearly predominant in the field of New Testament studies. Source and form criticism had ruled Gospel studies for generations, and the third member of the traditio-critical trinity, redaction criticism, was coming more and more into vogue. Like many postgraduates of that time, I opted to conduct a traditio-critical investigation into a single Gospel pericope, namely, the Cursing of the Fig-Tree story in Mark 11 and its relation to the Cleansing of the Temple (Telford 1980, 1991). After a survey of the history of interpretation, literary-, form-, source- and redaction-critical work on the Synoptic Gospels, and on Mark in particular, were brought to bear on the pericope. Then certain related motifs pertaining to the story were traced within background material supplied by the Old Testament (or Hebrew Bible), early Judaism and nascent Christianity. In particular, the place of the tree and especially the fig-tree within this material was examined, and their literary, religious and symbolic usage explored. Attention was given especially to the cultic dimension and note taken where fig-tree imagery was linked to temple imagery. The aim was to construct thereby a conceptual pattern or grid of related ideas and associations that would enable a modern reader to place himself or herself within the interpretative frame of reference that might have been adopted by a first-century reader of the Gospel. The approach, then, was a standard traditio-critical one with elements of what we might now describe as intertextuality, motif criticism and (ancient) reader-response criticism, although these terms were not in vogue then.

Throughout the twentieth century, indeed, historical-critical approaches like these have dominated biblical studies in general and the Gospel of Mark, my own special interest, in particular. For the major part of the century the emphasis has focused on the text's component parts and on the complex traditio-historical process that brought it into being. Chief among the now established historical-critical approaches are the interrelated methods of source, form and redaction criticism already mentioned. These methods start with the recognition that, archaeological evidence aside, written texts like the canonical Gospels are our major route to historical knowledge about Jesus, the early Christian communities and the world of early Christianity. As major champions of what Robert Alter has pejoratively termed an

'excavative' approach (Alter 1981: 13–14), source, form and redaction criticism have taught us to start with the evidence before us and to work back from the text (or behind it) to uncover the historical information it is capable of revealing. All three methods attempt to explain, for example, the discrepancies, ambiguities and awkwardnesses apparent on a close reading of the text in terms of the sources, forms and redaction of the literary or oral material drawn upon by the evangelist.

All three methods, in my view, have been and are extremely valuable (Telford 1995a: 30–1). Source criticism has taught us to establish the criteria by which we judge sources to have been used in our texts and to explore the evidence for the use of written sources in our Gospels. Form criticism has taught us to investigate the structured form taken by the traditional material, a form taken to be related to its function within the life and worship of the communities that transmitted it. Redaction criticism has taught us how to analyse the use made by the evangelists of their sources, whether written or oral, and has helped us to appreciate their literary and theological contribution to the developing Jesus tradition.

In the late seventies and early eighties, however, when I was just beginning my teaching career as a Lecturer at the University of Newcastle, the historical-critical method was under considerable fire, and there were dire warnings that it was clearly in decline. This was apparent in two of the fields that have occupied my attention, namely Markan studies and historical Jesus studies. Secular literary criticism and the so-called synchronic approaches (rhetorical criticism, narrative criticism, reader-response criticism, structuralism, etc.) were encouraging a more holistic approach to the text and with it a greater emphasis on textually integrative rather than textually disintegrative features. Criticisms were being directed increasingly against the three principal traditio-critical methods (source criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism) with respect to the tensions that actually exist between them, to their own intrinsic weaknesses or limitations, to the high degree of speculation involved in their putative diachronic reconstructions and to the lack of consensus in their results.

A key issue in Markan studies was whether the process that led from oral tradition to Gospel composition was an inevitable, collective and evolutionary one (as form critics claimed) or whether the non-linear and multidirectional nature of the tradition required us to posit Gospel composition as the consequence of individual authorial intention adopting a specific genre (as literary critics tended to claim) (Telford 1993: 492). There was also confusion in the field of Jesus studies. J. I. H. McDonald, in a penetrating article (1980), had talked about the maze scholars were in with regard to this question. A similar evaluation was given by the Italian scholar G. Ghiberti (1982). In assessing the state of Life of Jesus Research at that time, Ghiberti referred to it as one of relative stagnation. The then-prevailing mood of pessimism, and indeed scepticism, about what might be said about Jesus was attributed to the influence of Rudolf Bultmann (and hence to form criticism) (Telford 1994: 33–74).

In the eighties and nineties, however, the historical-critical method has, I believe, weathered the storm. In Markan studies, despite the criticism levelled against source, form or redaction criticism, a traditio-critical method involving these methods has continued to be practised throughout both decades particularly by European scholars.

In Jesus studies, the revitalization of the quest for the historical Jesus, which has been so distinctive a feature of the eighties and nineties, is due in no small measure to a renewed confidence in the historical-critical method (Telford 1994: 33–74, esp. 49–51). What is new, of course, is not that the historical-critical method has declined but that it must now compete with a whole panoply of new methods and approaches, a number of them operating within the increasingly influential literary paradigm.

The new methods and approaches

I began by drawing attention to what may be perceived, especially by those stepping into this field for the first time (though no less so by biblical scholars themselves!) as the totally confusing and bewildering array of methodological tools and approaches available to present-day researchers. This has been illustrated for me by my work on the Gospel of Mark. Indeed one aspect of this Gospel's importance over the last 150 years has been its important role in the history of biblical interpretation. Very few of the methods developed by biblical scholars have not been applied to Mark, and a number of them have in fact taken Mark as their principal subject (Telford 1990: 424–8).

This is true, for example, of composition criticism, with its focus on the way the evangelist has assembled diverse materials into a meaningful structure whose form reflects his theology (Dowd 1988); or genre criticism, with its aim of identifying the Gospel's literary environment, as well as literary type, and of establishing its place within the history of ancient literature (Collins 1990; Burridge 1992; Bryan 1993); or rhetorical criticism, with its investigation of the structural patterns, rhetorical devices and idioms used by its original author, and its examination of the literary strategies employed by the author to guide, persuade or manipulate the reader engaged in the construction of meaning (Dewey 1980; Thompson 1989; Camery-Hoggatt 1992); or reader-response criticism, with its focus on the reception of the Gospel by its modern or original readership (Fowler 1991); or narrative criticism, with its emphasis on the narrative qualities of the text, its narrative 'world', its point of view, plot, settings and characters (Rhoads and Michie 1982; van Iersel 1989; Marshall 1989); or structuralism, with its complex analysis of the 'deep structures' underlying the text and its abstract investigation of the mechanisms by which texts themselves become meaningful (Malbon 1986).

These new approaches have all been immensely valuable. They have made us aware of how texts operate as texts, of the distinctiveness of textuality and of the restraints imposed upon a writer by virtue of literary factors (such as genre, composition, rhetoric) as well as historical ones (such as sources or traditions). They have highlighted the textually integrative features (such as structure, compositional technique or rhetoric) that have operated on our texts and, where individual textual units are concerned, they have helped us to appreciate the importance of their immediate literary context as well as their prior sociological function.

METHODOLOGICAL PLURALISM IN MODERN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The variety of approaches

After this brief overview, it would be fair to say, in summing up, that, while the traditional methods seem to be still alive and well, what characterizes the present scene, and what constitutes a challenge for the contemporary exegete or researcher at the beginning of the new millennium, is the application of a whole variety of approaches, methods and techniques (including the ever-increasing use of the computer) on the part of biblical scholars, especially those, as I have said, who have produced the recent work on Mark or Jesus. How are we to make sense of all of this? How are we to deal with this methodological pluralism? How do the methods relate to one other? Do we face a situation of complementarity between the methods, or one of confusion? Is the present situation a sign that the discipline of biblical studies is becoming more refined, or simply fragmenting?

To gain a further impression of this diversity, let me tabulate alphabetically, and by no means exhaustively (see [Figure 49.1](#) below), the number of methods and approaches applied in the biblical field, some of which have been mentioned already.

Towards a taxonomy of methods and approaches

In trying to make sense of this hermeneutical cornucopia, and to understand how each of these relates to another, one's first task is to work towards some kind of taxonomy or classification of methods and approaches. One basic division that suggests itself is the paradigmatic one previously referred to, namely, an organization based on the threefold nature of biblical texts, that is, one that classifies the individual methods and approaches in respect of their treatment of the text as history, as literature, or as theology. A number of our methods and approaches can be divided up, therefore, very naturally, though very roughly, into those that address historical questions, those that engage literary issues, and those whose primary concern is in some sense theological.

If this classification is applied, then our lists (with some selection and rearrangement) become something like this (see [Figure 49.2](#) below).

Historical approaches

If we remind ourselves of the various contexts within which a biblical text may be interpreted, then the historical approaches would relate to one another somewhat as follows. Beginning with the establishment of the original text through textual criticism, historical criticism would seek to locate the text in its general historical context. The closely related traditio-critical methods, tradition criticism, source criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism would aim to provide a picture of the prehistory of the text's individual components, investigating the question of their incorporation into connected sources, their pre-literary form, the extent to which they have been edited. The history of religions approach would seek to relate the

traditions encountered in the text to comparable ones in the text's religious and cultural environment, and the history of ideas approach would examine in particular the place of certain of its ideational elements within a chosen trajectory. If prehistory or parallel developments are the principal focus of traditio-critical methods and the history of religions approach, then forward trajectories of the text or its constituent elements are the province of the history of interpretation or of reception. The social-scientific approaches, on the other hand, would seek to locate the text within the culture and society that gave rise to it, anthropological approaches seeking to foreground it with respect to cultural relations, sociological approaches employing either social description to illuminate significant features of its social

Allegorical Approaches	Historical Theology	Pastoral Theology
Anthropological Approaches	Historicism	'People's'/'Grass-roots' Approaches
Biblical Theology	History of Ideas	Philology
Black Theology	History of Interpretation	Psychological Approaches
Canonical Criticism	History of Reception	Reader-Response Criticism
Composition Criticism	History of Religions Approach	Redaction Criticism
Confessional Approaches	Holistic Interpretation	Rhetorical Criticism
Contextual Approaches	Ideological Approaches	Semantics
Cultural Criticism	Intertextuality	Semiotics
Cultural Relativism	Intratextuality	Social-Scientific Approaches
Culturally Informed Approaches	Jewish Exegesis	Socio-Cultural Approaches
Deconstruction	Liberationist Approaches	Socio-Historical Approaches
Devotional Approaches	Liberation Theology	Socio-Political Approaches
Ecological Approaches	Linguistics	Socio-Rhetorical Criticism
Ethical Approaches	Literary Approaches	Sociological Approaches
Etymology	Literary Criticism	Source Criticism
Feminist Interpretation	Materialist Interpretation	Structuralism
Feminist Theology	Marxist Interpretation	Textual Criticism
Form Criticism	Moral Criticism	The New Hermeneutic
Fundamentalism	Motif Criticism	The New Historicism
Genre Criticism	Muslim Interpretation	Theological Approaches
Hermeneutics	Narrative Criticism	Tradition Criticism
Historical Criticism	Narrative Theology	

Figure 49.1 Methods and approaches in the biblical field.

HISTORICAL	LITERARY	THEOLOGICAL
Textual Criticism	Linguistics	Biblical Theology
Historical Criticism	Semiotics	Narrative Theology
Tradition Criticism	Semantics	The New Hermeneutic
Source Criticism	Etymology	Canonical Criticism
Form Criticism	Philology	Confessional Approaches
Redaction Criticism	Literary Approaches	Devotional Approaches
History of Religions Approach	Bible as Literature	Pastoral Theology
History of Ideas	Intertextuality	Fundamentalism
History of Interpretation	Bible and Literature	Liberationist Approaches
History of Reception	Literary Criticism	Liberation Theology
Social-Scientific Approaches	Composition Criticism	People s / Grass-roots Approaches
Anthropological Approaches	Genre Criticism	Black Theology
Culturally Informed Approaches	Rhetorical Criticism	Feminist Theology
Cultural Criticism	Narrative Criticism	Ethical Approaches
Cultural Relativism	Reader-Response Criticism	Ecological Approaches
Socio-Cultural Approaches	Structuralism	
Sociological Approaches	Deconstruction	
Socio-Historical Approaches		
Socio-Political Approaches		
Psychological Approaches		

Figure 49.2 A taxonomy of methods and approaches in the biblical field.

matrix, or social theory to explain these. Psychological approaches, by contrast, would serve to illumine aspects of the author’s own mindset, predispositions, character traits, and so on, or socio-psychological approaches, corresponding elements relating to his community.

Literary approaches

Following the literary paradigm, the literary approaches would focus on the text as text, as a vehicle of communication. Linguistics, as we have seen, would examine the language of the text, employing its associated disciplines, semiotics, semantics, philology and etymology, to explore its meaning. Broader literary approaches might consider the biblical text as literature, or, overlapping with the history of inter-

pretation, or reception, pursue increasingly popular intertextual studies such as the use of the Bible in literature and film (Telford 1995b). The narrower methods associated with literary criticism or theory, some of which have been referred to already, might be employed to achieve specific aims: composition criticism, for example, to ascertain the arrangement or compositional techniques associated with its surface structure, genre criticism to determine its overall literary antecedents, rhetorical criticism to illumine its mechanisms of persuasion, narrative criticism to explore its plot, settings, characterization, and so on, reader-response criticism to investigate its effect upon the reader, structuralism to examine the elements associated with its deep structure, or even deconstruction to undermine any confidence in the notion of a 'fixed' meaning at all, and to emphasize the indeterminacy of the text.

Theological approaches

Following the theological paradigm, a biblical theology approach would seek to do justice to the distinctive content of the biblical text, namely, its religious or theological ideas, and the relation of such ideas to the rest of the biblical tradition. Narrative theology would focus on such ideas in so far as they were expressed through the literary medium of parable, allegory, story, and so on. With this category of approach could also be cited the 'new hermeneutic' associated with the work of post-war scholars such as E. Fuchs and G. Ebeling, a movement in exegesis that emphasizes the power of the biblical text, and of biblical language, not only to impart historical information but also to raise existential awareness and to promote a new self-understanding on the part of the reader. Both critical and confessional, and operating with the presupposition of the biblical text's place in an authoritative body of scripture, canonical criticism would seek, like other confessional approaches, to express the text's significance for the believing community. Devotional approaches to the text would likewise have the spiritual needs of the individual or the community in mind, as would pastoral theology. Other theological approaches to the biblical text have also been mentioned, in particular the ideological ones: fundamentalism, for example, with its insistence on the divine origin and infallibility of scripture, and on the necessity for the reader to be judged by rather than to judge the text; or the liberationist approaches (liberation theology, 'people's'/'grass roots' approaches, black theology, feminist theology), which seek to relate the text to the needs, aspirations and experience of the oppressed.

Some further categories, qualifications and distinctions

In sum, then, the threefold paradigmatic model goes a considerable way towards supplying us with a rough taxonomy of approaches within which we may make some sense of modern biblical interpretation's burgeoning hermeneutical enterprise. Inevitably, any systematization of a complex area produces some distortion. In this scheme, I have included the social-scientific and psychological approaches with the historical ones, and ideological approaches with the theological ones. Arguably each of these could constitute a category of its own. It would also be possible to argue that theology is a form of ideology, and that our third paradigm could be the

ideological one, with theological approaches subsumed under this category along with materialist interpretation or Marxist interpretation, which I have had to leave out. And where should ethical approaches be placed (including moral criticism)? Should these appear likewise with theological (or ideological) approaches, or remain distinct?

Nevertheless, the scheme here proffered serves to remind us that, despite their diversity, the variety of current methods represents in many ways a hermeneutical toolbox from which the exegete may select different tools for the textual job in hand. The medley of contemporary approaches, likewise, reflects the many divergent or convergent contexts within which biblical texts may be viewed. While it is possible to recognize clear demarcations in many cases between the paradigms and/or methods and approaches subsumed under these categories (some literary approaches, structuralism, for example, are committedly ahistorical, their purpose being to explore how meaning is achieved in a received text without reference to its antecedents or prehistory, and so they can be sharply distinguished from the traditio-historical methods), in other respects this is not the case. Some methods cross the boundary lines. Genre criticism has literary concerns, but in so far as it seeks to place a text in its literary-historical environment, historical ones. Some forms of reader-response criticism are only interested in the 'ideal' reader or the (implied) reader 'in' the text, while other approaches emphasize the reception of the text by its ancient readership, and hence retain a historical interest.

Some approaches are interdisciplinary in that they draw from more than one paradigmatic area or method, or have dual or even multiple concerns. Narrative theology, for example, may draw on the insights of narrative criticism. Redaction criticism is historical in the sense that it attempts to enter the mind of the original author of the text, literary in the sense that it builds upon, among other things, emendations made by the author to his sources, and theological in the sense that an understanding of the author's theology is its ultimate goal. Socio-rhetorical criticism focuses not only on a text's literary techniques and rhetorical devices but also on the relation of these to the text's social world. Some approaches are interdisciplinary, moreover, in the sense that they approach their texts with a combination of two or more distinct methods. In both Markan and Jesus studies, for example, one often sees an approach that combines a literary with a sociological perspective (Freyne 1988; Camery-Hoggatt 1992), hence seeking to do justice to our texts as literary products, on the one hand, but with 'real-world' connections and concerns on the other.

With such qualifications to our paradigms in mind, let me make, therefore, some further hopefully useful distinctions between the various methods and approaches. Certain of these have been touched upon already. An act of literary communication involves an author, a text and a reader, and the production of meaning through a process of interpretation involves due attention to one or more of these aspects. One way of differentiating the various methods and approaches, consequently, is with respect to the relative weight accorded to each of these aspects. Some approaches may be distinguished by their emphasis on the intention of the original author (compare the historical approaches, historical criticism, redaction criticism), others by their location of meaning in the text itself (compare literary approaches such as genre criticism or structuralism), and still others by their claim that it is readers who create meaning (compare literary approaches such as reader-response criticism).

Analyses of the text may be 'diachronic', that is, attuned to the prehistory of its component parts (e.g. tradition criticism, form criticism, source criticism), or 'synchronic', that is, directed to its final form, interrelationships and effects without regard to the process that brought it into being in the first place (e.g. rhetorical criticism, reader-response criticism, structuralism). Within these broad categories, further demarcations can be made. The influence of secular literary studies has led scholars to distinguish between those methods that treat the biblical text 'atomistically', that is, those that 'disintegrate' or 'fragment' the text (e.g. tradition criticism, source criticism, form criticism), and those that treat it 'holistically', that is, as a whole (e.g. redaction criticism, composition criticism, genre criticism, rhetorical criticism, reader-response criticism, structuralism). Holistic interpretation, a 'synchronic' rather than a 'diachronic' form of interpretation, is also one of the distinguishing features of canonical criticism, for example, an individual passage or text being accorded meaning in relation to its place within the entire body of inspired scripture.

A similar way of characterizing the various approaches is to distinguish those that focus on individual passages in a text without reference to the whole, that is, those preoccupied with 'micro-structure' (e.g. form criticism), and those that interpret individual units in light of the whole, that is, those preoccupied with 'macro-structure' (e.g. composition criticism). Methods and approaches may focus on discrete units (e.g. form criticism) or they may involve themselves with wider synchronic or diachronic contexts, the social-scientific approaches, for example, or those seeking to establish trajectories of various kinds (tradition criticism, history of religions, history of ideas, history of interpretation, history of reception).

A further differentiating feature are those methods and approaches that are prepared to invoke extrinsic factors outside of the text in the process of its interpretation (e.g. the historical-critical methods) and those prepared to invoke only intrinsic factors (like many of the literary approaches), or, to put it another way, those that may be deemed to be occupied with the author's 'real world' as opposed to his 'narrative' or 'story world'. The distinction may also be expressed in terms of those approaches that are literary-historical in nature (like source, form and redaction criticism), and those that are literary-aesthetic, that is, which explore the ways the author and/or text achieve their effects (e.g. rhetorical criticism). One of the most common images now employed, indeed, almost to the point of cliché, is the notion of texts as 'windows' (that is, allowing us to get back behind them to the history they reveal) and texts as 'mirrors' (that is, reflecting only their own story world).

Three more related hermeneutical *differentiae* might be mentioned. The first is the distinction to be made between 'intratextual' and 'extratextual' methods and approaches. The former epithet is applied to those methods and approaches, whether social-scientific or literary, which hold that 'experiences and events are only understood with reference to a framework of categories and values developed within a particular culture', or claim that 'the meaning of a religious text is inseparable from the particular language within which it is formed' (Brett 1990: 320). Canonical criticism would be an example of the use of intratextuality in relation to a theological approach. In this context, 'extratextual' would then refer to those methods and approaches that apply an interpretative framework to the data or text that is not intrinsic to either.

The second is the distinction to be made between approaches that are 'contextual' and those that are not. Contextual approaches

have in common that they include the reader in the definition of the literary work and include the context of reader and/or writer in the process of interpretation. The 'work' is not the text but comes into being when text and reader interact. The text, therefore, is not an 'object' upon which the interpreter performs analytic or investigative procedures (as does a scientist) in order to extract a theoretically univocal intrinsic meaning. Rather, it is a poetic structure that is engaged, from within a concrete situation, by a reader in the process of achieving meaning. (Brown and Schneiders 1989: 1159)

A number of the literary approaches (especially reader-response criticism) would come under this rubric, as would a number of the ideological approaches (e.g. liberation or feminist theology) in so far as they invite interpreters to exercise a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' not only upon the text and its author(s) but also upon themselves.

This brings us to our third *differentia*, one touched upon already, and this is the distinction to be drawn between those methods and approaches that are purely 'descriptive', 'evaluative' or 'analytical', that is, those that aim to be as objective as possible, or attempt to keep a distance between the interpreter and that which is being interpreted (e.g. the historical-critical approaches), and those methods and approaches that are 'actualizing', that is, which challenge or involve the interpreter existentially, or call forth various forms of response or commitment (e.g. the ideological approaches, or the confessional or devotional approaches).

Refinement, complementarity or fragmentation?

Thus far, then, I have reviewed the current state of modern biblical interpretation, commenting on the nature and scope of contemporary biblical hermeneutics, mentioning the three major paradigms in the field, and outlining the principal methods and approaches that have been in operation, especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Having proffered a basic taxonomy of these methods and approaches, and offered some qualifications to it as well as some further distinctions, let me now take up the key question introduced at the beginning of this chapter, before finishing with discussion of some methodological issues. My question, you will recall, was whether the methodological pluralism, which so obviously characterizes modern biblical interpretation today, betokens refinement, complementarity, confusion or even fragmentation within the field of biblical studies. Do the methodological developments of the nineteen eighties and nineties represent centripetal or centrifugal tendencies with respect to the discipline?

The case has been argued both ways. A number of the new methods and approaches can be considered as refinements or developments of the older more traditional methods. Socio-rhetorical criticism (Robbins 1996), for example, can clearly be seen to be a development of classic form criticism. Composition criticism, and even some aspects of narrative criticism, can be seen to have emerged or are indistinguishable

from redaction criticism in its broader applications. One feature of Markan studies in the late nineteen seventies and eighties was a growing consensus that summary passages, seams, insertions or modifications of pericopae were an inadequate base for developing a full picture of Mark's style and theology. Redaction (or editorial) criticism of the narrower kind began to give way, therefore, to a broader composition criticism (Dowd 1988) or narrative criticism (Marshall 1989) in its search for the Markan fingerprints. One major aspect of the sociological approach, namely, the use of social description to interpret the Bible, has long been a feature of what was called 'Introduction', and, methodologically, little distinguishes this aspect from the traditional approaches.

A case can be made, then, that what we are seeing is the increased sophistication of the biblical hermeneutical enterprise. Texts supply us with contexts within contexts, and the plurality of methods matches the complex nature of the biblical text itself, as I have indicated. The plurality of methods, therefore, is to be welcomed, each supplying a corrective to the other, and the whole offering us a much richer perspective on our sources. This can be seen, for example, in the way that the three principal traditio-critical methods, source, form and redaction criticism, have complemented each other, each separating source material from editorial material, tradition from redaction, with source criticism pursuing evidence of written sources underlying the text, form criticism investigating its oral antecedents, and redaction criticism (at least in its earlier manifestation) engaging the editorial remainder.

This complementarity can be seen to a degree also in the relationship pertaining between redaction criticism, composition criticism, rhetorical criticism and narrative criticism. All are holistic methods, with redaction criticism interfacing with the text's prehistory by highlighting the author's use of the sources, composition criticism analysing the structure and arrangement of the resultant whole in relation to its individual components, rhetorical criticism investigating the text's 'discourse' or patterns of persuasion, and narrative criticism examining the text's 'story' in terms of its plot, settings, characters, point of view, and so on.

Other voices have been raised, however, in favour of the fragmentation view. There have been numerous doomsayers, for example, announcing the end of the traditio-critical methods, whether source criticism (Friedman 1987), or form criticism (Güttgemanns 1979) or redaction criticism (Black 1989). Where source criticism is concerned, there has been an increasing impatience on the part of biblical scholars with the minutiae of atomistic, diachronic, source-critical enquiry, and its allegedly speculative reconstructions, and a corresponding enthusiasm for the holistic and synchronic literary approaches. Where form criticism is concerned, some have questioned the very concept of an original 'form' in respect of the sayings or actions of Jesus transmitted in the oral tradition, or have called for new models for the oral transmission process, and a revised understanding of the differences between orality and textuality (Kelber 1983). Where redaction criticism is concerned, some have argued that the very broadening of the redaction-critical method has brought it into the field of general literary criticism and hence within range of dehistoricizing methods and approaches that undermine its validity as a literary-historical method. In this respect, it could be argued, the method has sown the seeds of its own destruction. Advocates of the theological paradigm have likewise berated historical-critical

methodologies for excluding theological concerns from their agenda (Watson 1994). Given that the religious community is still a primary context for the biblical text, and that its interpretation depends to some degree on the interpreter's point of view, then the privileging of historical questions to the detriment of the text's role in promoting theological reflection is to be resisted.

Faultlines within the biblical hermeneutical enterprise, then, are apparent, especially between the historical paradigm and the literary one. It is undoubtedly true that literary criticism has posed a challenge to the historical-critical method, though not, of course uniformly or even inevitably. Literary-critical approaches have certainly come to dominate discussion since the 1970s, but they too have their problems and limitations, and these should be acknowledged if synchronic and diachronic methods are to work in harmony with one another (Telford 1993). Likewise, it would be unfortunate if a legitimate desire to give a renewed accent to the theological dimensions of the biblical text were to undermine the very solid gains made by the historical-critical method in advancing biblical scholarship, illuminating the Bible and its world, and freeing the modern interpreter from hitherto dogmatic or obscurantist views.

Some issues in methodology

What is/are the appropriate interpretative method(s)?

In this final section, I would like to raise some methodological issues, and in particular to discuss three that I have encountered in my own work on Mark and Jesus. One major problem for the contemporary interpreter or exegete, given the extensive hermeneutical toolbox at his or her disposal, is to determine what the appropriate method is for the particular text under scrutiny. Biblical scholars are all familiar with the fact that a particular textual problem may be the subject of a bewildering number of attempted solutions by virtue of the equally bewildering number of different methods applied to it. In the Gospel of Mark, a notorious crux is 14.51–2, the flight of the naked young man. Where different hermeneutical orientations are concerned, few passages in the New Testament are as revealing as this one! At one end of the spectrum are historical-critical or perhaps historical-not-so-critical proposals that would identify this young man as a thinly disguised John Mark of Jerusalem. At the other end are a number of interpretations that would invest the young man with Christological or baptismal significance (by virtue of the 'garment' associated with him, which he then discards in the manner of the Christian initiate). The Old Testament or Hebrew Bible has also often been suggested as the underlying catalyst for this curious datum (cf. e.g. Amos 2.16, 'And he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day' or even the Joseph story in Gen. 39.11–12 and 41.39–43 where the flight of Joseph from Potiphar's wife, leaving his garment behind, is taken as an allusion supporting an underlying Christ as second 'Joseph' motif in the text). On the other hand, it has been suggested that these two verses are simply the expurgated residue of a longer passage in what was an earlier 'Secret Gospel of Mark' and that in its fuller version all would have been revealed to the reader. In short, what we witness here is a number of solutions that

reflect the application of a variety of different methods deemed appropriate to the text, whether historical criticism, source criticism, literary criticism, motif criticism, intertextuality, or narrative criticism! Interpreters must therefore learn to exercise their discretion in determining which tool is appropriate for the particular textual problem encountered.

A major issue in my work on Mark is the question whether source criticism or literary criticism should be invoked in the treatment or explanation of inconsistencies or ambiguities in the text. Breaks, gaps in the narrative, inconsistencies, ambiguities, duplications or repetitions (all of which abound in Mark) are generally taken by source critics as evidence of the use of sources, and hence of faulty editing, but by literary critics as narrative devices or strategies (opacity, irony, misdirection, emphasis, etc.), and hence as conscious or unconscious signals to the reader involved in the construction of meaning. How do we decide between the two? Decisions on these questions can affect our judgement on certain of the key Markan questions, namely, 'How skilful an author is the evangelist?' 'How coherent a story world has he created?' and 'What is the relationship between the narrator's 'story' world and the author's 'real' world?' Some scholars, therefore, following the literary paradigm, would argue that Mark's ambiguities were deliberately created by him in line with a consistent literary and theological purpose, while others, following the historical paradigm, would maintain that they are the product of the inadequate redaction of his sources. This dispute over creativity in fact lies at the heart of the modern debate about Mark's Gospel. Some scholars, following the stricter form-, source- and redaction-critical model that I have already outlined, tend to see Mark as a conservative redactor or editor, while others, influenced by a wider literary criticism, tend to see Mark almost as a candidate for the Nobel Prize for Literature! The reality is that Mark is a composite text that displays considerable awkwardness at pericope level but considerable sophistication when viewed holistically. That, indeed, is one of its continuing puzzles.

What is/are the appropriate interpretative context(s)?

A second major problem for the contemporary interpreter or exegete is to determine what the appropriate interpretative context is for the data or text under consideration. This is an important point, for example, in contemporary Jesus studies. Which proposed background, especially within Judaism, can be established as the most important interpretative context for the reconstruction of Jesus' teaching and mission: Pharisaism, apocalyptic, the wisdom tradition, Rabbinic Judaism, the prophetic tradition, Essene sectarianism, the charismatic Hasidism of Galilee, the Zealots? All have been suggested (Telford 1994: 33–74, esp. 68). In Markan studies, the debate revolves around a number of connected issues. The first of these is what one might call 'intrinsic versus extrinsic referencing'. In studying the Gospel from a purely literary point of view, can extrinsic factors be kept at bay? All texts point beyond themselves (intertextuality) and so even from a literary point of view, can we ignore the major fact of intertextuality in the case of Mark (or most of the New Testament writings, for that matter), namely, the writer's use of the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible?

A related issue is whether the 'world' of the text and the 'real world' can be kept separate. According to a recent literary study of Markan irony by J. Camery-Hoggatt, 'The reader who ignores the historical and cultural milieu in which the narrative originates will be unable to detect even literary features of the text [e.g. ironic nuances]' (1992: 75). Mark's story world is often interpenetrated with the world of his present community, and literary methods that seek to discount the latter often run into difficulties. A third issue is what one might call 'holistic versus atomistic referencing'. Should one interpret any passage in Mark in the light of the whole (macro-structure), or independently in respect of its component parts (micro-structure)? According to scholars such as H. Räisänen, it is better to make sense of individual passages without constraint than to seek to fit them into Mark's total view (1990: 30). According to others, the total view is indispensable in understanding individual passages (Geddert 1989).

What is the appropriate interpretative sequence?

A third related problem for the contemporary interpreter or exegete is to determine what the appropriate interpretative sequence is for the hermeneutical operation under consideration. If more than one method or approach is to be employed, then what governs the priority or order in which they should be applied? Should synchronic analysis precede diachronic analysis, for example? Should holistic interpretation take precedence over an atomistic approach? Should we begin with a literary approach to our texts and then proceed to a historical one, or vice versa, as most Introductions to the Bible tend to do? Should we invoke extrinsic factors to interpret our texts only when the possibility of intrinsic explanations have been exhausted? The relationship of all these methodologies to one another, therefore, is likely to continue to be a burning hermeneutical issue well into the new millennium!

CONCLUSION

Despite this, it is possible to conclude that the plurality of methods and approaches is a sign of richness and not of disorder in modern biblical interpretation. Biblical texts are complex, as I hope I have demonstrated, and require a variety of competencies on the part of the interpreter. Each of the methods and approaches adumbrated in this chapter have their strengths as well as their weaknesses. Scholars will continue to hold reservations about the use of certain methods and particular approaches. While they may serve to illumine the 'narrative world' of a biblical text, literary approaches can often serve to cast radical doubt on the 'real world' correspondences predicated of it by historical approaches. Modern sociological approaches and theories often raise questions of appropriateness and comparability when pressed into the service of ancient text analysis. Though popular nowadays, a combined literary and sociological approach, critics say, may simply be unwise to bypass the prehistory of the text, or the intention of its author, in the search for historicity. Nevertheless, despite these divisions, the revitalization of biblical studies in our own day has, in considerable measure, been occasioned by the application of these new methods and approaches. The future lies, in my opinion, with the further refine-

ment and fruitful integration of these various methodologies. Biblical interpretation will continue to develop and, if it is not to fragment, the pressure will grow for an inclusive, consensus-building methodology (or methodologies), particularly one(s) that will reconcile the synchronic and diachronic approaches that have in part divided American and European scholarship in recent times. Such a methodology will need to be sophisticated enough to offer criteria, for example, whereby we might assess the textual evidence that leads to divergent literary and source-critical evaluations. Starting from a synchronic literary analysis, for example, it might proceed by asking what are the principles by which we might deconstruct the text in such a way as to establish diachronic theories that might lead to greater consensus. Whatever the eventual methodological solutions, a balance will need to be kept between historical, literary and theological concerns in biblical interpretation, since all three, like the Trinity, represent the threefold nature of its subject matter.

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